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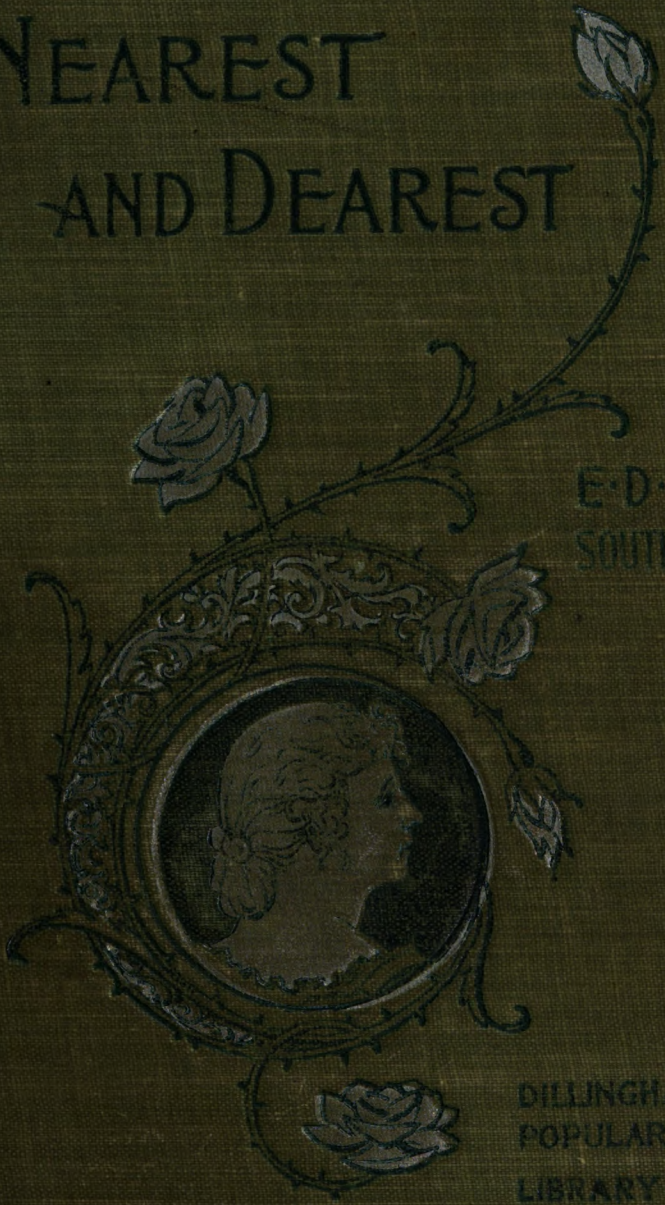
NEAREST AND DEAREST



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NEAREST AND DEAREST.

A Novel.

BY

MRS. E. D. E. N. SOUTHWORTH,

AUTHOR OF

"THE HIDDEN HAND," "UNKNOWN," "ONLY A GIRL'S HEART," ETC., ETC., ETC.

NEW YORK

G. W. Dillingham Co., Publishers,

MDCCCXCVIII.

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PUBLISHERS' NOTICE.

"NEAREST AND DEAREST" is one of the most interesting stories that has come from the pen of its gifted authoress. The heroine, little Nea, is a lovely and winning character, and so true to life that she seems somehow to be a personal acquaintance of the reader's. The leading incidents of the story are so novel and wonderful that its interest never flags, but is fresh and strong from beginning to end.

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NEAREST AND DEAREST.

CHAPTER I.

THE WOLF'S HEAD.

"There is a story connected with that house, so strange, frightful and mysterious that I doubt if anything like it ever happened in this world before."

The speaker was one of a small party of friends, who, on a fine spring afternoon, were driving along an abandoned turnpike, through the forest a few miles north of Washington, where they came suddenly upon an old, deserted mansion standing on the left side of the road.

It was a huge, square, stone building, with all its doors and windows gone, and nothing left but its walls, its chimneys and its roof, around which the encroaching growth of the wild wood pressed so closely that the young trees seemed to prop the old ruins.

"What place is this?" inquired an inquisitive girl.

"I am going to tell you. This solitary old road was, once upon a time, the great highway between the new city of Washington and all the North. And this old ruin was once the famous Wolf's Head, where the stage-coaches on this line stopped to change horses and the passengers to take meals or lodgings, as the case might require," explained the first speaker.

"But the story, ma'am?" urged the curious school girl.

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"It was something that occurred in the early days of the city, to a happy bridal pair. On a pleasant May morning, a joyous party consisting of the bride and bridegroom, attended, as was the fashion of those days, by their bridesmaids and groomsmen, set out from the city to commence their wedding tour. In the evening they reached this house, the Wolf's Head Tavern, then in its glory. Here they intended to stay until the morning. But who can foresee fate? For here, in the dead of night, there happened something so dark, terrible, mysterious and utterly inexplicable, that surely its like never occurred to human being, or in human dwelling. But the story is too long to tell here, and now. Remind me to relate it when we reach home," said the leader of the party, as she turned the horse's head and took the way back to the city.

The promised story was not told that evening. Unforeseen events prevented its narration. But I shall tell it now, in the following pages—vailing real names under fictitious ones.

At the time of our tale, Washington city was a vast anomaly. It was then only a few years since the site had been settled, and it soon became the scene of the wildest speculations and of the most startling transitions from poverty to wealth that has ever been seen in a civilized community.

Land agents, merchants, and mechanics, whose business lay in building and building materials, were in some cases making rapid fortunes, and in others losing all the little they had ever possessed; for the growth of the new city was not at all commensurate with the expectations of the speculators. So that some of the handsomest houses remained vacant for years, until they fell into a state of dilapidation, and became the tenements of the poorest class of English and Irish emigrants.

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Among the least fortunate of these speculators was Duncan Roslyn, a Baltimore merchant, who sold out his business in "the monumental city" and moved to Washington with his family, which consisted of his second wife, Zora, a pretty widow whom he had recently married, his son by his first marriage, Lancelot, a boy ten years old, his little step-daughter, Nerissa Lovel, a child of three, and his beautiful ward, Eldiva Lisburne, a girl of fourteen. They were attended by two negro servants, Bigeloe, or "Old Biggs," and Appolonia, or "Aunt Apple."

Ducan Roslyn had leased a house on one of the grandest new avenues leading due south from the capitol to the Anacostia River, a fine old mansion, that had stood upon the same ground since the first settlement of the country.

It was "Shadow Hall." It had once been a grand manor hall, surrounded by an extensive park and forest called "The Shadows"; but now it was nothing but a very dark old house on the new avenue, with none of its ancient possessions left except the large garden, poultry-yard and out-buildings appertaining to the old country home, which suddenly found itself in the midst of new and fashionable city company.

The house had stood untenanted for more than twenty years. And there was good reason why it should have done so.

A terrible tragedy, a thunderbolt of ruin, had suddenly fallen upon guilt and passion, and had terminated, in dishonor and death, that long line of Moncktons, lords of the manor of "The Shadows," and denizens of the land from the date of the royal patent granted to their ancestors by King Charles the Second.

After the extinction of the direct line the manor fell to the next of kin—a wealthy English nobleman—who, caring little for this transatlantic inheritance, sold it to a

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speculator, who divided the land into building lots, which he sold in his turn, leaving nothing but Shadow Hall, with its luxuriant old garden, its yards and out-houses, all of which were offered for rent or for sale.

Still, for a long period the mansion stood vacant. Shadow Hall, as a dwelling-place, could not be endured by flesh and blood.

Ever since the fatal night of the catastrophe that had desolated the house, Shadow Hall had the ill reputation of being haunted. By late foot-passengers on the avenue spectre lights had been seen, and shrill shrieks had been heard in the dark, deserted house. The troubled spirits of the lovers who had been slain in each other's arms, and the guilty spirit of the murderer and suicide, were said to wander there at night through all the rooms. The ghost of the woman had been seen oftenest, and by the greatest number of witnesses, who whispered that she was not arrayed in the white garments of blessed spirits, nor in the black ones of lost souls, but in a long, flowing, red robe, which trailed behind her as she paced up and down the halls, weeping, wringing her hands, and pleading, or seeming to plead to be heard.

It was in the early spring that Duncan Roslyn and his family first moved into the "manor house," as it was commonly called, in contradistinction to the rows of brick houses on the opposite side of the avenue.

The children were delighted with the garden, which was now a perfect thicket of blooming roses and spring flowers, with patches of strawberry beds and many fruit trees, all inclosed in a high wall, overgrown with luxuriant hedges of raspberry and blackberry vines; and they roved about in wild joy, while the elder members of the household were settling things within doors.

No one objected to the house but Old Biggs, who

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declared most solemnly that human nature could never live and prosper there.

He claimed to know about the horrible catastrophe which had overwhelmed and destroyed the last Monckton of The Shadows.

He said that he had heard the story from his old Uncle Ambrose, who had been body-servant with young Mr. Rolfe Monckton, when that unhappy gentleman, in a fit of frenzy slew his bride and her cousin, and then shot himself.

Old Biggs said-that his Uncle Ambrose had often and often both seen and heard the lost and wandering spirits of those miserable sinners, for after the tragedy he had been left in charge of the house, until the ghosts killed him, and he was found dead in his bed one morning. Since that no one could be got to take care of the place for love or money.

Old Biggs wondered, so he did, how a 'spectable, 'sponsible ge'man like Marse Duncan could put his innocent family in such a place to be worried to death.

"Oh, shet up, Old Man Biggs," exclaimed Aunt Apple, who did not share her fellow-servant's superstitious fears. "De house is a good house nuff! *I* likes it, I do!"

This conversation took place in the kitchen where Aunt Apple, assisted by Old Biggs, was preparing the first supper to be eaten in the new home.

As this kitchen became the scene of some strange events, it is necessary to give my readers some idea of its appearance.

It was a room on the ground-floor, at the rear of the north wing, with a broad, open fireplace on the east side, where it joined the dining-room; a staircase on the south end, leading up to the rooms above, a large window and door on the west side, opening into the back-

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yard and communicating with an alley leading to the front, and finally with two doors on the north end leading into two little bedrooms, the one nearest the yard being appropriated to Aunt Apple and the one next the dining-room to Uncle Biggs. The furniture of the kitchen was as yet simple enough, consisting of a long oak table under the back window, a few wooden chairs along the walls, and cooking utensils in the dark "cuddy" under the stairs.

It was this north wing of the old house that the family most affected, probably because it was the newest part of the building, in the best repair and nearest the beautiful garden. The children's rooms were over the kitchen. The master and mistress's chamber, over the dining-room, opened upon a broad porch over-looking the garden, which was divided from the house only by the narrow alley of the servant's entrance.

On the first evening of their arrival supper was served to the family in the dining-room next this kitchen. A fine, cheerful room it was, opening upon the lower, broad porch, alley and garden. Its walls were covered with a peculiar sort of paper that was very fashionable at that time, representing rural scenes in France,—groves, vineyards, chateaux and cottages, with groups of vine-dressing peasants, or piping and dancing youths and maidens,—all producing a very lively effect, which became the especial delight of the child Nerissa.

Mr. Roslyn was a tall, fair, handsome man, of about forty-five years of age. Mrs. Roslyn was a pretty little brunette of thirty.

They had been married but a few months when they came to Washington, and were very much attached to each other and to the children by their former marriages. Indeed, Mr. Rosyln's niece Eldiva Lisburne, declared that her uncle loved her little step-daughter,

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Nerissa better than his own son; and her aunt loved her step-son, Lancelot, more than her own daughter.

But this was, probably, only a generous emulation of the parents in kindness to each other's children.

In a few weeks the family were comfortably settled in the old house.

The two elder children were sent to school. Eldiva was placed at the Georgetown Convent of the Visitation, and Lancelot at the Jesuit's College, in the same locality. These were the very best and almost the only places of education in the district. By special arrangement the children were permitted to return home every Saturday and remain until Monday.

Old Biggs had complained of strange sights and sounds that disturbed his sleep; but had been very sternly rebuked by his master, who ordered him *never* to utter such nonsense again, under penalty of his severest displeasure.

So Old Biggs only talked to the neighbors' servants, and spread the dark reputation of the haunted house behind his master's back.

Mrs. Roslyn herself was sometimes frightened in the night by unaccountable sights and sounds; but Mr. Roslyn always had an explanation ready. It was the wind sighing around the eaves of the house, or rats running through the hollow partitions, or bricks and plaster falling down the old chimney. And once when his wife started in the night, and, bathed in a cold perspiration, shrieked that a cold hand had clasped her fingers, and a weeping woman's face had bent closely down to gaze at hers, Mr. Roslyn declared that it was all "imagination," and showed so much anger towards his dear Zora as to frighten her from ever mentioning the subject again.

And before the summer was over the family moved into the front building, facing the avenue, where the

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master and mistress had a large, bright room, where the morning sun shone in between the shade of the tall Lombardy poplar trees, and where Nea and her nurse had the little hall chamber adjoining.

Here they suffered no more nocturnal disturbance, and hence grew the report that the rear building contained the only haunted chambers.

Meanwhile, Old Biggs prophesied that nothing but misfortune would ever happen to a family that dared to live in Shadow Hall, a house with a black curse upon it.

And as time passed it really seemed as if the old fellow's predictions must be fulfilled.

Mr. Roslyn was a man with a very sanguine temperament, and he had—to use a homely expression—"Too many irons in the fire."

After the first year his affairs began to fall into embarrassment. After the second year affairs grew still worse After three years' struggle to keep up his business he put all his property into the hands of creditors, paid a hundred cents in the dollar on all his debts, and after the settlement, had nothing left but his lease of Shadow Hall, his household furniture and plate, and a few domestic animals, such as a horse, a cow, pigs, and a variety of poultry. The negro servants were the property of Mrs. Roslyn, and had come with her from St. Mary's county.

So much confidence had men in the integrity of Duncan Roslyn, and so much sympathy with his misfortunes, that his creditors, having their claims now fully satisfied, would willingly have advanced money to give him a fresh start in business, but that the man's health was utterly broken down, so that a congestive chill, caught on the marshy flats of the city, in the autumn of his third year's residence, put a speedy end to his earthly career.

For weeks after her sudden bereavement his widow was too utterly overwhelmed by her loss to think of her

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financial circumstances or of her future. Bills came in for the girl's and the boy's schooling but received no attention from her. The doctor's and undertaker's accounts were utterly disregarded. An epidemic of typhus fever broke out in the city without disturbing her in the least. In short, nothing could arouse her from the apathy of despair until her only child, her little Nerissa was stricken with the fever and quickly brought to the verge of the grave.

Then, indeed, the mother, stung to action by keen anxiety, became the most assiduous attendant and the most devoted nurse of the little patient sufferer.

Nerissa recovered, but not without great misfortune, the effect of that fearful fever. As she convalesced it was noticed that her sight seemed dim. In looking at any object she would hold it very close to her eyes, or sideways, to the right or left, as if trying to see it more distinctly. Sometimes in crossing a room she would come in collision with a chair or table.

These circumstances at first gave Nerissa's friends no uneasiness.

"The child is weak and nervous after her long illness, but she will outgrow this," said the mother; and every one believed the words.

But the child herself began to complain. She could not see the big letters on her alphabet card. She could not see her doll's face. Every day little Nerissa repeated these words, or others to the same effect.

She went to the office of Dr. Hamilton—who was their neighbor and lived in a new red brick house on the same side of the avenue, a little farther down towards the river—and told him all about Nerissa's fast failing sight.

The family physician—who thought the case very serious, even from the boy's crude description—went the next morning and made an examination of his little

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patient's eyes, and then pronounced an opinion that plunged the whole family in grief and the mother in despair.

The child, he said, was afflicted with amaurosis, or darkening of the eyes, from the failure of the optic nerve —a malady which medical skill was utterly powerless to control. The most that could be done for her would be to build up her constitution and leave the rest to nature. There *had* been rare cases of this disease in childhood, where, with the growth of the patient, the optic nerve had gradually recovered its vitality and restored the sight. This was the only hope, a very faint and remote one.

Of course, the little Nerissa had not heard the doctor pronounce this sentence which condemned her to almost hopeless darkness for the term of her natural life; but yet it seemed impossible to keep the sad truth from her. Indiscreet words dropped now and then, exclamations of pity or distress, information conveyed in a low tone to visiting neighbors, who were full of condolences—all these avenues were constantly open to the child, who soon began to suspect the full weight of the calamity hanging over her.

"Am I going to be blind? Am I going to be blind *always?*" she would ask in the most pathetic manner—now of her mother, now of Eldiva, or of Lance, or of the colored people.

And almost every one encouraged her to hope, while they treated her with more affection and indulgence than they had ever shown before.

But the most devoted of Nerissa's friends was certainly Lancelot. Little Nerissa had always been very fond of Lance, and now he returned her affection abundantly. Every one who ever saw them together noticed the strange attachment between the boy and the blind baby,

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for they were little more than boy and baby—Lance being then about fourteen years of age, and Nea six.

Lance had left college at the end of the last term, because there was no money to pay his fees. And now, having nothing else to do, he gave himself up to take care of Nea. It was Lance who read stories to her, taught her hymns and songs, wound up her musical instrument, and bought her little pets. Once he bought her a pair of young Guinea pigs, for which he gave a sailor his spy-glass, and with which the child was delighted.

It was Lance who took her out to walk in the shady and fragrant garden, and plucked for her plums and peaches and other late autumn fruits; or led her along the sunny avenue, whose sidewalks were flanked with natural hedges of wild rose, eglantine, and dogwood bushes; or when she was tired, lifted her in his arms and carried her. And Nea never seemed so content as when he held her in this way, with her hands clasped around his neck, and her failing eyes hidden on his shoulder.

Every one said it was difficult to understand the boy's devotion to the baby. But, then, Lance had not a blood relation in this world, so far as he knew. Mrs. Roslyn was his step-mother, and he liked her well enough; but she was not his own mother, and she had no need of him.

Nea was his step-sister, and not his own sister; but, then, she *had* need of him, every hour in the day, poor, little, helpless, blind baby! and she repaid his devotion to her with warmest love and gentlest caresses.

There was something pathetic in the child's efforts to strain her sight and see her friends as long as she could, until at last, when weeks had passed, she could only see their faces as faint vapors.

Her latest vision of material scenes was in the strong

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contrast of light and darkness as seen in the rising or the setting of the sun on clear days.

To give her this enjoyment, the boy would lift her out of bed in the morning, wrap her in a shawl, and take her out before the front of the house and turn her face to the east, where the sun would rise above the green hills of Maryland, beyond the Anacostia River, and flood all the horizon with light.

She could see the blaze of morning dimly, as we might see a very distant illumination at midnight, and she would smile quietly and silently for a while, and then sometimes she would fold her hands and whisper, reverently:

"It is like opening the gates of Heaven, Lance! Oh! Lance, I pray the dear Lord will leave me this much sight—to see the gates of Heaven open like this."

"Yes, dear little Nea, I know—I know—I know He will!" the boy would answer, with the greatest confidence, though often with a voice choked by emotion.

He would sit there with Nea as long as she liked to remain, and then go in and put her in the hands of her nurse to be dressed for breakfast.

Late in the afternoon he would take her up to the back window of the little nursery over the kitchen to see the sun set behind the Virginia hills beyond the Potomac River, seeming to kindle water, land and sky into a conflagration.

Again the vivid, brilliant light and color, with its strong contrasts, would reach the failing eyes of the blind child, something like a splendid aurora borealis seen by us at night, and she would clasp her hands in deep delight and murmur:

"Oh! if the good Lord will only leave me sight enough to see the gates of glory open and shut morning and evening!"

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"He will!—He will!—He will! dear little Nea," the boy would answer confidently, with his broken voice.

But a trouble was coming to the child that seemed to her harder to bear than even her blindness. A long-promised midshipman's warrant, that the boy had despaired of receiving, was suddenly given to Lancelot Roslyn, and he was ordered immediately to join the *Porpoise* man-of-war, then about to sail from the Navy Yard to the Mediteranean Sea.

The news fell like a thunderbolt on the family at Shadow Hall; but Lancelot was provided for, and every one said that they *ought* to be glad, if they were not so.

Mrs. Roslyn sold her tea service of silver plate to buy an outfit for her step-son, and set about helping Lance to pack his sea-chest.

Nea, when she heard that Lance was going away, wondered much, but did not then grieve, for she had no practical experience in the pain of parting.

Mrs. Roslyn had a hearty cry while she and her step-son were packing his sea-chest together.

"Oh, Lance!" she said, "I hate for you to go! I hate to lose you; but there is nothing else to do, I suppose! It is all for the best?"

"Yes, mamma, it is all for the best! and I will send *all* my pay home to you except just what is absolutely necessary to keep me decent. I will never use tobacco, nor wine, nor spirits, nor anything else that is useless or hurtful; but I will save everything I can for you and Nea," earnestly replied the boy.

"I know! I know, Lance! and I am glad to know this, for your sake as well as for ours! And Nea! Oh, my poor, little, helpless, patient, blind child! What is to become of her? What will be her future life?" exclaimed the mother, in a sudden paroxysm of distress.

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Lance paused in his work and looked at her in great tribulation.

"It is not only that she will be blind, but she will be poor and friendless! What has she to hope for in life, my poor little, sightless child? She can never live a girl's life of hope, or a woman's life of love. She can never marry!—Never! She must be alone, if she lives, alone and unloved to her life's end!"

"Mamma!" said the boy, in a low, guttural tone, as he unconsciously pressed both hands upon his chest, as if to keep down the emotion of pity that was suffocating him—"Mamma! *no!* as long as I live in this world, Nea shall *never* be alone, *never* be unloved. If Nea can never be married because she will always be blind, why, then, neither will I ever be married because she cannot be! I will live for Nea! You will take care of her while I am at sea, and when I come home I will come to you both."

"Ah, my boy!" said the lady, with a sad smile. "You mean all this now! You speak sincerely; but, after all, Lance, we are no real kin to you. We have no sort of claim upon you! You are launched on the sea of life now, and have a right to make the voyage of life untrammelled by us!"

"Mamma!" interrupted the boy, speaking with as much deep earnestness as if his years had been thirty-four instead of fourteen. "I tell you I give my life to Nea! She is more to me than all the world! She is—oh!—She is dearer and nearer to me than anything else in life! Little, blind, Nea!" he murmured, in a tone of infinite tenderness. "She is and she always shall be—my *nearest and dearest.*"

"God bless you, Lance! Heaven grant that it may be as you say! But that is a very selfish prayer! Why should, your strong life be bound down to the needs of a poor, little, blind child?"

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"Because she is my nearest and dearest," replied the boy, with a deep, sweet smile, as if he had found the precise words that expressed his feeling and explained his action.

That afternoon Lancelot took Nerissa once more to the nursery window, to see the sunset, *dimly* as she always saw it, even at its brightest.

He did not tell her that it was the last sunset they would see together for years; but he was even more than unusally tender and affectionate to the child, and lingered with her at the window until the last light had faded out from the western horizon, and the stars began to appear.

Nea could not see the stars; but presently she clapped her hands with glee, and exclaimed:

"I can see dim, red spots on the ground! I know what they are! They are the brick-kiln fires!"

Yes, they were the brick-kiln fires, glowing, sparkling and blazing with the most intensely vivid light, yet to little Nea's blind eyes they were only dim, red spots on the dark ground.

And while Nea looked at them, she felt that she was not quite, *quite* blind. They lingered at the window until they were called to tea.

The next morning, as usual, Lance lifted Nea out of bed, wrapped her in a shawl, and took her out before the house to see the sun rise.

It happened to be an unusually clear and brilliant morning, and the eastern horizon looked like a celestial conflagration, flaming up over earth and sky.

"Oh! Lance! are the gates wide, *wide* open, and do I see better than ever?" cried the child, in delight.

"The gates *are* wide opened, and you do see better, Nea," answered the boy.

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They lingered as long as they could, and then Lancelot lifted Nerissa up, to carry her into the house.

"You are too good to me, Lance. You are the best brother in the whole world!" said the child, as she put her arms around his neck and laid her head on his shoulder.

"Who would not be good to you, little Nea?" murmured the boy, tenderly.

"Everybody is good, but you are the best, Lance! But oh, Lance!" she added, in a troubled tone, "what do you suppose Diva says? She says I am not your own little sister at all! I am not any kin to you! not anything to you. But it is not so. She is mistaken! She does not know, does she, Lance? I *am* something to you, Lance!"

"Yes you are, little Nea, you are nearest and dearest. Say it after me, little Nea. Nearest and dearest."

"'Nearest and dearest,'" murmured the child, lifting her head and smiling.

"Now remember that when I am gone away, Nea."

"Yes, I will; but you won't stay long," said the child, speaking as if he were only going up in the city on an errand.

"Not longer than I can help, Nea," replied the boy, as he took her upstairs and put her in the hands of her maid.

An hour after that, Lancelot Roslyn, having breakfasted with the family began his rounds of leave-taking, for he was to join his ship that day.

Finally the moment of parting came. He shook hands with Old Biggs—who gave him a blessing, and would have added a plenty of good advice if the boy had had time to listen—and then went through the same ceremony with Aunt Apple, who, as usual, delivered the fruit of her tree of knowledge by saying:

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"Now wotever you do, Marse Lance, don't you expect puffection! No! nyther in de ship, nor de sea, nor de wedder, nor de crew!—caze you can't get it, and de sooner you makes up your mind to dat, de better natured you'll be and de happier! And now good-bye, young marse, and de Lord bless you."

Lancelot, with Nea in his arms, kissed his step-mother and Eldiva, and then, forcing himself to be merry, pressed Nerissa to his bosom very fondly, pressed his lips to her beautiful, blind eyes, told her always to remember that she was his nearest and dearest, and then—suddenly sat her down in her mother's lap and ran out of the room.

Not until Lance had been gone some hours did Nea begin to realize what had happened to her. Then she began to grieve, but in so quiet and patient a way that she touched the hearts of all who saw her.

She had but one little plaint:

"I want Lance! Oh, I want Lance!"

Nea did not recover from her grief as quickly as childhood does. Day after day her piteous plaint was heard:

"I want Lance! Oh! I want Lance!"

One morning, when she was sitting curled up on the lounge in the upper front bed-chamber, where her mother and her cousin were at work embroidering lace vails, Nea kept up her plaint so long and piteously that Mrs. Roslyn at last lost patience with her little blind daughter, and said, rather sharply:

"Nea, you must hush that. Don't you know that you are worrying us almost to death?"

Nea hushed at once, and the lace-making went on in undisturbed silence.

But after a few minutes, the mother, feeling sorry for the child, glanced towards her, and saw Nea still sitting

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curled up alone on the lounge, with her tiny hands holding a small handkerchief to her face, and quietly drying her eyes, like some poor, little, wounded, patient woman might do.

CHAPTER II.

ELDIVA.

A beautiful and happy girl,
With a step as soft as summer air,
And fresh young lips and brow of pearl,
Shadowed by many a careless curl
Of unconfined and flowing hair;
A seeming child in everything,
Save thoughtful brow and ripening charms,
As nature wears the smile of spring
When sinking into summer's arms.—WHITTIER.

Eldiva Lisburne was now seventeen years old, and very beautiful. Her form was small, slender, yet well rounded; it was elegant in shape, and graceful in motion. Her head was small and well set upon the lovely rounded throat and bust. Her face was oval, her features were regular and delicate. Her complexion was dark and clear, warming into a rich glow of fire on cheeks and lips. Her eyes were of the darkest gray, shaded with long, black lashes, and arched by jet-black brows. Her hair was black, and wound into a rich braid at the nape of her neck, and rippling in short curls upon her sweet low forhead. Her voice was soft and clear, her laugh was low and silvery. But perfect as she was in form, features and complexion, her greatest charm was, after all, in her soul-kindled countenance, which so often beamed with love or glowed with enthusiasm.

Had Duncan Roslyn lived and prospered, Eldiva Lis-

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burne would now have been brought out into society under the best possible auspices; but the failure and death of her guardian had enforced a temporary retirement from the world.

Eldiva did not regret this.

She loved her home in Shadow Hall, her aunt, her little cousin, the old negro servants, the household pets, and the animals in the barnyard. She loved all the life about her.

She enjoyed her books, her flowers, her music, painting and embroidery, for she was skilled in many accomplishments, which her aesthetic tastes led her to cultivate. And she enjoyed the society of the near neighbors and intimate friends whom the family were free to receive even during the year of mourning.

And there were a plenty of these to keep the house from being lonely.

First, there was Colonel North, who was in command at the arsenal at Greenleaf's Point, but had his private house and grounds on a green knoll on the banks of the river, where he lived with his handsome daughter, Imperia, a Juno-like blond beauty, who, even now in her sixteenth year, was turning the heads of half the young gentleman in the city. They came so often to Shadow Hall, and Miss North was the most intimate friend and companion of Eldiva Lisburne.

Then there was Commodore Yorke, in command at the Navy Yard, and his gallant son, Captain Milo Yorke, now home with his father on leave. The commodore was fifty years old, stout, and gray; the captain was twenty-five, tall, dark, and handsome. They were both good friends of the Roslyns, and it was through the persistent exertions of the son, backed by the great influence of the father, that Lancelot Roslyn had finally obtained his midshipman's warrant.

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Next there was Lord John Daw, the brother of an English duke. This Lord John was a very eccentric Briton, who had come over to the United States in the first years of the existence of Washington City, and had invested largely in real estate. He had been one of the most successful speculators, and now, at the end of twenty years, was undoubtedly the wealthiest as well as the haughtiest man in Washington. He was indeed insufferably insolent. From an immense height of pretension he looked down upon the Roslyns, whose acquaintance he had formed during some business transaction with the head of that family.

"Roslyn was a good name," he said to his confidential agent, Richard Daly--"a very good old Scotch name; but they were nothing but trades people—nothing but trades people! and he did not know how officers of the army and navy, who were necessarily gentlemen, could associate on equal terms with them! But, then, in this half barbarous country all social barriers seemed to be thrown down!"

Very few of these "barbarians" gave this English lord his title, which was only one of courtesy at best. They called him Old John Daw behind his back, and only Mr. Daw to his face. This invariably put him in a fume, which he was not always dignified enough to hide. He was about fifty-five years old, stout, with a fair, rosy, clean shaven face, and short cut hair as white as snow. He always wore a black coat, black knee breeches, long, black silk stockings and low shoes with large silver buckles—although this style of dress had then gone out of fashion.

He was a widower, with but one son, who was on his travels in Europe, but was expected home before the meeting of Congress.

This son, named for his father John Daw, was born in

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England and had never been to the United States. When the father emigrated he left the son at Eton College, from which, in due time, he went to Oxford, where he spent several years. For the last two years the young man had been travelling.

Lord John Daw lived alone in a very handsome house, surrounded by extensive grounds, on Capitol Hill, with an establishment of servants that might have sufficed for a family of twenty.

He received no company, except at occasional dinner parties given to gentlemen alone.

Perhaps it was the solitude of his house that drove him so often to Shadow Hall, for it was a laughable certainty that while he affected to look down upon "those trades people," he could not keep away from the Roslyns.

He was their landlord, and though he was reputed to be a very hard one to all his other tenants, exacting the last penny of rent and ejecting delinquents on the first failure of payment, yet after the death of Mr. Roslyn he instructed his land agent, Richard Daly, not to press the widow. And so, poor, little, careless, easy-going Zora Roslyn, when she got the quarterly bills, put them away carefully with her other bills in the japan box, and as she was not dunned she did not pay. In fact, she could not pay without selling some of her personal property. She knew that she would have to make this sacrifice sometime or other, but she was disposed to put off the evil day as long as possible.

And, meantime, she was living on credit, and living—not extravagantly, for she bought no more than she was obliged to get, but very expensively, and for this reason:

Zora Roslyn,—unlike her late husband, who had no blood relations except his son—Zora Roslyn was blessed with an army of uncles, aunts and cousins, who were

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living down in Maryland, and who came up in large detachments every winter to do their shopping, and to enter into some of the many gayeties of the season. They did not know that they were helping to ruin the widow, and she would have died sooner than give them a hint to that effect. And they, in their turn, would have willingly entertained her and her whole household all the summer, as she knew very well.

Early in December of the second year after the death of Mr. Roslyn, a large party came up from St. Inigoes to spend a few weeks. Among them was Mrs. Roslyn's old Uncle and Aunt Wells, and her three cousins—Avonia Sothoron, Phœbus Verne and Neil Carnes.

Avonia Sothoron was the niece of Mrs. Wells, and Phœbus Verne was the nephew of Mr. Wells. They were both orphans and the adopted children of the kindly couple, who meant to leave them all their property, without the usual condition that they should intermarry to keep the estate, and this, perhaps, was the very best way of insuring a love match between them.

Avonia Sothoron was a very pretty girl of sixteen years, of medium height, with a fresh complexion, hazel eyes, and brown hair.

Phœbus Verne was a long-limbed youth of nineteen years, with a rosy complexion, blue eyes and red hair. He admired his cousin, Avonia, without the slightest reference to her half of the expected inheritance.

Besides these visitors, there was Neil Carnes, a half-brother of the late Lucius Lovel, and an uncle of Nea. He was a bachelor of about forty years of age, engaged in the practice of law at Leonard Town, in Maryland. In person he was a short, thick-set man, with a dark and swarthy complexion, black eyes, and coarse black hair and whiskers—not a handsome man, certainly, yet one

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who pleased superficial observers by his excellent sentiments and winning manners.

Being a near relation of the family, and a bachelor, he was given the back room over the kitchen, that had once been the nursery.

There were many other visitors in that crowded house, but it is not necessary to particularize them.

Mrs. Roslyn, Eldiva and Nea had to evacuate the best rooms and return again to their deserted chambers in the back buildings. Mrs. Roslyn took her own old room, and with an extra bed, accommodated Eldiva and Nea, while the red-haired Phœbus—being a young bachelor—was put in the little den next to the nursery that had been once occupied by Lance.

This season happened to be one of the gayest that had ever been known in the new city.

The President and his wife held "levees" in the same "White House" that is still doing duty as the Executive Mansion. And they were not nearly so much crowded and far pleasanter than the "receptions" of the present, for, in addition to space and music, they had tea and cakes—in fact, they were simple and hospitable, rather than formal and official.

But the balls of the foreign ministers' wives were stately enough, and enjoyable to all who could get to them; for it was not only necessary to have an invitation and a dress, but it was indispensable to have a carriage in this new city, where the avenues were still like country roads, pretty and pleasant in summer, but nearly impassable in winter, and where the citizens were still "under the necessity of going through a broad morass, or a deep wood of one or two miles, to see their nearest neighbor."

It was at the British minister's ball that Eldiva Lisburne met her destiny in young John Daw.

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Eldiva was there, with her circle of young friends—the Juno-like beauty, Imperia North; the blooming Hebe, Avonia Sothoron; the dark and handsome Milo Yorke; and the long-limbed, ruddy-faced and red-haired Phœbus Verne.

Lord John Daw was sauntering through the room, leaning on the arm of his son, a tall, slender, elegantly formed and graceful man about twenty-two years of age, with an aquiline profile, a very fair complexion, very light yellow hair and mustache, and light blue eyes.

In passing through the brilliantly lighted, heavily perfumed, and well filled yet not crowded rooms, Mr. Daw quietly asked his father:

"Do you know those people sitting on the blue sofa?"

"Yes, Jack, I know them," curtly replied the old gentleman.

"Will you tell me who they are, then?"

"A—some of my tenants—some of the Roslyns from Shadow Hall."

"And that beautiful girl—that lovely little brunette in the black lace dress—is she a Miss Roslyn?" inquired the young man as his gaze was fixed upon Eldiva.

"No, her name is Lisburne," very shortly replied the old gentleman.

"Since you are acquainted with the young lady, will you present me?" persevered the young gentleman.

"No, Jack, that I won't. They are nothing but tradespeople, and have no more business here than my housekeeper or butler."

Mr. John Daw said no more, but later in the evening, while his father was in deep discussion with the minister, the young gentleman slipped away and sought out an acquaintance, Capt. Milo Yorke whom he had seen in conversation with Eldiva, and asked for an introduction to her.

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The presentation was made, and John Daw took the vacant seat beside Eldiva Lisburne, while Capt. Milo Yorke led Imperia North to the head of the cotillion that was just forming, and Phœbus Verne followed with Avonia Sothoron.

John Daw and Eldiva Lisburne were left seated alone on the sofa.

This was the beginning of their acquaintance, and the beginning of their mutual passion; for whether it was the effect of the attraction of opposites, of the small, dark, sparkling brunette—whose beauty suggested that of some brilliant, little, tropical bird—and of the tall, fair, cold blonde, for each other, or whether the fascination had its origin in the soul, it is certain that theirs was a case of love at first sight.

Some twenty minutes later Lord John Daw, having missed his son, and looked for him through all the rooms, came peering from side to side toward the sofa in the corner, and found him there.

"Good evening, Miss Lisburne. Jack, I am going home," said the old gentleman.

"Are you, sir? Then, good night—or shall I see you to your carriage?" inquired the young man, rising.

"You shall see me to my carriage, sir! Good night, Miss Lisburne."

"Good night, Lord John," replied the sweet, clear voice.

"*Au revoir*, Miss Lisburne. I hope to find you here when I return?" said the young man, gayly.

"Oh, yes, I am a 'wall-flower' to-night," lightly replied the girl.

"Humph! humph! humph!" grunted Lord John Daw. "Come along, Jack.

The two gentlemen walked away, threading through the brilliant crowd, out of the room, down the stairs and

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to the lower hall, where they had to wait until Lord John's carriage was brought up.

"You must go home with me, Jack," said the old gentleman, as soon as he found himself alone with his son in front of the hall.

"Are you not well, sir?" inquired the young man.

"Yes, you young dog, but you must go home with me all the same."

"Very well, sir, I will go," said the young man, with a quiet smile.

"I don't wish you to pursue your acquaintance with that girl, Jack! Who introduced you?" inquired Lord John, as soon as they were seated in the carriage and the wheels were in motion.

"Capt. Yorke, my Lord."

"That's it! An officer in the army introduces the grandson of a duke to a tradesman's daughter in the drawing-rooms of an ambassador! Such an anomally could not occur in any place on earth except in this capital of a model republic, where all the safeguards of society are thrown down and trampled under foot. Humph! I have lived too long!" said the old gentleman, with a grunt.

"Miss Lisburne is not a tradesman's daughter, sir; she is the daughter of the late Colonel Lisburne of the army, who was killed at the battle of Bladensburg.

"Killed fighting against his lawful sovereign! for, mind, King George *is* the lawful sovereign of these colonies, which will be sure to fall into his hands again, for this so-called republic is nothing better than a stage play on which the curtain will drop sooner or later," snarled the old Tory. "And now look here, Jack—"

"Well, sir!"

"I won't have it! Do you hear me? I won't have it, I say!"

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"Won't have what, sir?"

"I won't have you dangling after that girl!"

"Why, sir, I have not known the young lady for more than an hour," said the young gentleman, deprecatingly.

"Oh, I know! You can't deceive me!"

And the old man became silent. When the carriage stopped John Daw got out first, assisted his father to alight, and led him up to the door, which was opened by a tall footman, who at once took his master's hat, and gloves, and cloak—for ample cloaks and not overcoats were then worn.

While this service was going on John Daw slipped quickly and quietly back to the carriage just as it was about to turn toward the stables, jumped in and ordered the disappointed and disgusted coachman to drive back as fast as possible to the British Legation.

The journey both ways had taken an hour. It was after one o'clock when John Daw found himself again before Eldiva Lisburne.

She was sitting on the blue sofa, just where he had left her. She was surrounded by gentlemen, and looking somewhat embarrassed by the number of her worshipers; but as Mr. John Daw joined the circle she looked up and welcomed him back with a smile, which he answered by a frown, for he was unreasonably angry.

Luckily for him, a set of cotillions was forming and the gentlemen, with bows and "au revoir," went off to keep their engagements with partners previously selected.

"I told you that I was a wall-flower for the evening, and that you would find me here on your return," said Eldiva.

"I am very happy to do so," replied Mr. Daw, as he resumed his old seat by her side. "I was detained longer than I expected to see my father home."

He did not leave her side again that evening until the

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company broke up and he had placed her in the carriage with her friends.

The next morning, in that pleasant dining-room whose long north windows opened upon the big porch, the alley, and the old garden, and groves and where an open wood fire was burning, and a long, well-spread breakfast table was standing, the family and guests of Shadow Hall were gathered around the board, talking of the ball at the British Legation given on the previous night.

"I hope you had a pleasant evening," said Mrs. Roslyn, beaming on Miss Sothoron.

"Oh, yes!" exclaimed that radiant young woman. "I danced in *every* set! More than half the time with Phœbus, however. And that long-limbed lad came near tripping me up on more that twenty occasions," she added, with a laughing glance toward the offender.

"And you, Eldiva? As you did not enter into any of the festivities, I fear you had a dull evening," said Mrs. Roslyn, kindly, to her favorite niece.

"She!" exclaimed Avonia, before the other could reply. "Why, she was the belle of the ball! Ah! let your quiet girls alone for coquetry! Sitting there in her black lace dress, without an ornament except the tea roses in her hair and on her bosom, never moving from that corner sofa, she drew a crowd of admirers around her and kept them there all the evening!"

Mrs. Roslyn smiled on her favorite, with a look that said—"Of course, I might have known it."

"Oh, nonsense? How you do exaggerate, Avonia! If any looked at me it was only because I was a new face in the new scene," said Eldiva, with a laugh and a blush.

"And Mr. Daw, then! Did he look at you only because you were a new face? All the faces there must have been new to him. Yet he had eyes for none but yours!" persisted Avonia, for she was a persistent young person,

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"*He* is done for—that is certain!" exclaimed Phœbus Verne.

And then all who had been at the ball began to talk of Eldiva's conquest.

"I certainly think he is very much taken with your niece, my dear. He asked permission to call on her here," remarked Mrs. Wells.

"John Daw is certainly a very ambitious match for any young lady—that is, so far as wealth and position go," added Mr. Wells.

"I know nothing about the younger man personally; I have never seen him," said Zora Roslyn; "but if I were Eldiva, I would not marry into that family for anything on earth. I would not be the daughter-in-law of that old man if he were the King of England! No, not to be the Princess of Wales!"

"I wouldn't marry that family for a dollar!" solemnly declared Nerissa, coming to the support of her mother.

"There is no question of marriage whatever!" exclaimed Eldiva, deeply blushing and petulantly pushing her black ringlets from her forehead. "A gentleman cannot be civil without raising a talk of this kind! It is very bad taste, let me tell you!"

"Oh! Oh! Oh!" laughed Avonia. "There were twenty or more gentlemen who were 'civil' to you last night, but we're not talking of them at all. We were talking of Mr. Jack Daw, who was not only civil, but devoted, infatuated! lost!"

At that moment Gad, the new footman that had been imported from the country to help to wait upon the guests, came in with a card and little waiter, and said:

"For Miss Lisburne."

Eldiva took it and reddened.

"Is it from the Jack Daw?" inquired Avonia, mischievously.

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"It is from Mr. John Daw," answered the young girl. "How could any gentleman be so—so—so thoughtless as to come so early, while we are still at breakfast?" she petulantly inquired—half pleased, half vexed by the visit.

"'Early,' my dear? Look at the clock!" exclaimed Mrs. Roslyn. "It is noon; and it is not the visitor who is early, but the breakfast is very late! You were not any of you down until after eleven!"

'Upon my word! what dissipated habits we are falling into, eh, Joyce, my dear? What would the good people of St. Inigoes say if they knew of it?" inquired Mr. Jubal Wells, as he arose from the table.

All the company, having finished their breakfast, followed his example.

Miss Lisburne passed into the drawing-room to receive her visitor.

Mr. Daw had brought a bouquet of rare exotics, which he begged Miss Lisburne would honor him by accepting. He had also a box at the theatre for that evening, which he wished to place at the disposal of Mrs. Wells and the young ladies.

Miss Lisburne gratefully accepted the bouquet, but politely referred him to the elder lady in regard to the box.

As Mr. and Mrs. Wells entered the room the young gentleman saluted them, and renewed the offer of his box, adding that the play was to be Shakespeare's comedy of "The Taming of the Shrew," brought out by the greatest comedians of the age, the world-renowned Jefferson family.

The old gentleman and lady looked at each other, at first inquiringly, then approvingly, and, finally, the gay and happy septagenarians thanked the donor and gladly accepted the box,

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Other members of the family now came in, and among them Mrs. Roslyn, to whom Mr. Wells formally presented Mr. John Daw.

And soon after this the visitor made his bow and withdrew.

Every one liked him, and as soon as he was gone every one was eloquent in his praise.

That evening the whole family went to the Washington Theatre to witness the performance of the "Taming of the Shrew," by the talented family of comedians whose descendants are, even to this day, famous in their profession.

Mr. John Daw did not occupy a seat in his own box, but from his obscure post—a back seat in the circle, opposite—he watched every movement and expression of Miss Lisburne, and between the acts went over to pay his respects to her party.

This was only the beginning of the many attentions he lavished on Miss Lisburne, Mrs. Roslyn, and all their guests at the house.

When these attentions had been rendered for several weeks, an unpleasant event occurred—a visit from Lord John Daw.

One blustering day in March, when the wind had been blowing for thirty-six hours, and had dried up all the mud on the avenue, and was raising it in suffocating clouds above ground, Lord John's carriage drew up under the Lombardy poplar before Shadow Hall, and he alighted and sent in his card to Mrs. Roslyn, with the request that she would see him alone on business for a few moments.

This card was brought to the widow as she sat with her lady friends in the back parlor, engaged in her favorite pastime of working lace.

"On business!" faltered Zora, turning pale as death,

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as she remembered the five quarters' rent that was due and her utter inability to pay it.

She excused herself to her friends, and passed trembling, to the front parlor, where she found Lord John in his black coat. knee breeches, and silk hose, trotting up and down the floor like a great, mad crow.

"Good morning, Lord John. You wish to see me on business? Pray, take this," she said, in as calm a tone as she could command, rolling the easiest chair in the room up to the fireplace for his use.

"Good morning!" growled the old man, dropping into the offered seat. Then turning fiercely upon her he demanded:

"Where is Jack?"

"I—beg pardon?" inquired the lady, in some perplexity, as she stood on the rug near him.

"My son, Mr. John Daw, mum! I ask you where he, is? That is plain English."

"Really, Lord John," said Zora Roslyn, forgetting all fears of her landlord in her indignation at his rudeness, and cooly seating herself in a small arm-chair at the opposite corner of the chimney—"I am not your son's warden."

"I don't know that, mum! I don't know that! Hark ye, Mrs. Roslyn! That boy of mine has been dangling after your girl for the last six weeks! *I* know all about it!—but I did not think he was so besotted as to want to marry her!"

Zora Roslyn was too deeply indignant to speak; she would not have condescended to notice that insolent speech even by a rebuke; if it had been to have saved the speaker's soul! She sat with folded hands, quietly regarding him.

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CHAPTER III.

LORD AND LADY.

"And I won't have it, I tell you, mum! I won't have it!" he continued in a heat.

"You seem to have lost your self-control, Lord John. I beg that you will try to regain it," replied Mrs. Roslyn.

"Hark ye, Mistress Roslyn! That young dog of mine came to me yesterday morning, and said he had won the affections—pah! he made me sick!—of Miss—Miss—What's-her-name! Your niece, and asked me—the impertinent jack-a-napes—for my sanction to the engagement. No matter what I said to him in reply—it was to the point, you may depend upon that. He walked out of the room. I thought he had gone into the garden to smoke. But he has not been near the house since."

"I am not surprised at that," coolly remarked Mrs. Roslyn.

"And now, mum, *where is he?*"

"Really, Lord John, you had better get the public bellman to ring for the missing young gentleman, for I cannot give you the least help in finding him," said Zora, calmly.

"Look ye, mum! I don't know where the young dog is skulking; but I do know that he will turn up here before long. And I won't have it I say! I won't have it; do you understand?"

Mrs. Roslyn vouchsafed no reply.

"I will not permit this marriage! I will not permit it! Why the deuce don't you answer me, mum?"

"Really, my lord, I do not see what either you or I have to do with this affair, which concerns the young people alone," replied Zora Roslyn.

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Old John Daw gasped for breath, fell back in his chair and glared at her. Such treason! such heterodoxy! such—such—such *blasphemy* he had never heard in all his life before. Was *this*, then, what republics were bringing people to?

He pulled his handkerchief from his pocket and wiped his silvery bullet-head. He jumped from his chair again and trotted up and down the floor.

Suddenly he returned and confronted Zora Roslyn, who was sitting with her hands folded on her lap, serenely enjoying his discomfiture.

"You ask me what this most disgraceful marriage is to you or me, mum! You ask me this, I think."

"Yes."

"It is everything that is disgusting to me, mum! I am the young man's father, mum!"

"I presume so."

"And he is my son!"

"As a consequence."

"And I will not permit him to marry a girl of low birth."

Zora Roslyn deigned no reply to this insolence.

"I will go to the church, if necessary, and forbid the bans," he answered, hotly.

"You would not have the chance, Lord John. Bans are never published in this city. People have not time for anything like that."

"No bans! No law! No order! everything going to perdition! Then I'll forbid the marriage. At the very altar!" fumed the old man.

"You will make a useless as well as an unseemly disturbance, Lord John. Pray compose yourself and listen to me. This is Washington City and not London. You have not the least power to prevent your son from marrying whom he pleases."

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"By George! the deuce I have not!" exclaimed the old man, gasping and growing red.

"You have not, really. You must know that as well as I do."

He did know it; though he had forgotten, or chosen to ignore the fact.

"Well, mum," he said, "though I may not have the power to restrain my graceless son—for he is of age—set fire to him!—you certainly have the control of your niece, who is a minor. And I trust you are too honorable a woman to allow her to force herself into a noble family who would be degraded by the union."

"Lord John," replied Mrs. Roslyn, controlling her temper, and speaking very calmly, "I am quite as unwilling for my niece to marry Mr. Daw as you could be for your son to marry Miss Lisburne for, to be candid, you would be a very undesirable family connection; but—"

"Humph! humph! humph! There! We are complimenting each other it seems."

"I beg your pardon if my necessary frankness has given offence," said the lady.

"Oh, not at all!—not at all! And since these are your sentiments, I hope, mum, that you will unite with me in trying to prevent the scandal of this marriage. You can do so by using your authority over your niece."

"Excuse me, Lord John, I was about to explain, when you interrupted me, that I have no such authority over my niece, and have no more power to hinder this marriage than you have. Any marriageable girl in this district is free to marry without her guardian's consent," said Mrs. Roslyn, quietly.

"To the foul fiend with all republics, I say! All ancient, venerable barriers in domestic and social and national life—everything is going to ruin—and the sooner it gets there the better, I say! Come Mistress

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Roslyn, though we have no authority in this matter, we must do our best to bring these young rebels to reason, you know."

"I shall do nothing whatever, Lord John."

"What, what, what, what!"

"I shall not interfere."

"Why, you said—you said—you said that you were as much opposed to the match as myself."

"And so I am, for—pardon me for repeating it—I should consider you extremely objectionable as a relation; but the affair is really no business of ours; we are not the pair to be married."

"Lord bless my soul. No of course not. What the deuce does this widow mean? Is the woman going to propose to me?" gasped the old man under his breath. Then recovering himself with an effort, he said:

"Think of it, mum. Think what must happen, unless you do interfere. Think what a scandal a runaway marriage would be."

"There shall be no such event as that, Lord John, I give you my word."

"Ah, I thought you would come to your reason!"

"Understand me: I will *not* interfere either to advance or retard my niece's marriage; but if she should accept Mr. Daw I certainly will not drive them to the expedient of an elopement. They shall be properly married from my house."

"Lord have mercy on me! Whatever tempted me to come to this demon-driven country!" gasped the Briton, parading up and down the room in a great heat.

At that moment there was a knock at the front door, followed quickly by the entrance of Gad, showing in a tall, thin, dark man of about fifty years of age—Mr. Richard Daly, Lord John Daw's land agent.

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"Ah, Richard, is it you! Has Mr. Daw got home?" inquired the old man.

"No, my lord!"

"Then what the deuce brings you here?"

"If you please, my lord, I have been looking for your lordship for the last two hours, and seeing your lordship's carriage before this door I took the liberty to come in."

"What do you want of me?"

"If you please, my lord, Brown of the Indian Queen Tavern, has sent a messenger to the house to say that Mr. Daw is lying extremely ill there, and he begs that you will come to him at once."

"Lord bless my soul! What is the matter with the poor, dear lad?"

"I don't know, my lord, but the man said he was out of his head."

"Lord bless me, I'll go at once! I'll—I'll call and take Dr. Hamilton along with me! Bless my soul! Bless my soul! Biess my soul! Good morning, Mrs. Roslyn."

"Good morning, Lord John. I hope Mr. Daw will get better. I presume it is only the ague; there is so much of it about the city," said Zora, kindly. But Lord John Daw had trotted off.

"And now I *have* done it!" exclaimed the lady, dropping back into her chair in a state between laughing and crying. "Now he won't spare me another day! He'll put an execution in the house before twenty-four hours is over my head, as sure as fate! Well, 'if the worst comes to the worst,' I think Aunt and Uncle Wells will give me and Nea house-room in the country until we can turn around."

So saying, she went back to her guests in the dining-room.

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If Zora Roslyn could have heard the first words uttered by Lord John to his agent, her suspicions would have been confirmed.

Richard Daly had preceded his lordship to the sidewalk, and when the footman opened the door the agent politely assisted the old man to enter the carriage.

"Tell the coachman to go to Dr. Hamilton's office and then get in here, Richard; I want to talk to you about that defaulting tenant of mine," said Lord John, as soon as he was seated comfortably among his cushions.

Richard Daly obeyed orders, and then his principal abruptly inquired:

"How much rent does that woman, the widow Roslyn owe?"

"She is nearly two years behindhand, sir; but I could not tell your lordship exactly without referring to the books."

"And how the deuce, sir, is it that you let a tenant get so far into arrears as that? *You* are a reliable agent," burst out the irritable old man.

"If your lordship please to recall the fact, you instructed me not to press that account until further orders," respectfully answered the agent.

"You have them now, then. Demand payment at once. If it is not rendered put in an execution."

"Yes, my lord."

"That woman is quite capable of reducing Mr. John Daw to work in the brick-yards, confound her! I wish I could bring *her* down to pick oakum in the penitentiary!" he grunted, *soto voce*.

As the carriage now stopped before the doctor's office the old man said no more, but with the assistance of Richard Daly he got out.

He was fortunate in finding the doctor in, and he forthwith stated the case and carried him off to his carriage,

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which was turned and driven rapidly up to the Capitol Hill and down Pennsylvania Avenue to the Indian Queen Tavern, which then stood on the site now occupied by the Metropolitan Hotel.

They found Mr. John Daw in bed in an upper chamber, watched by a waiter.

He was in high fever, with low muttering delirium, and the burden of his monologue was always—

"Love still love!"

or "Eldiva! Eldiva!" which on his lips meant the same thing.

His malady proved to be a severe attack of malarial fever, which then prevailed in some portions of Washington at all seasons of the year. His illness was neither caused nor aggravated by his father's opposition to his contemplated marriage—in fact, had nothing whatever to do with it, or with anything else but the miasma of which the new city was so full, and if, in his delirium, he raved of his lady, it was because she had been in his mind at the time of his attack.

Yet Lord John Daw was convinced that his own despotic cruelty in crossing "Jack's" passion, had driven that only and beloved son into a brain fever, and upon the brink of the grave.

He was too proud a man to mention these misgivings to the attending physician, who might have set him right on the subject; but he was so full of remorse and terror that he privately recorded an oath in Heaven that if the Lord would spare his boy's life he would mortify his own pride and permit him to marry whom he pleased—especially since he had learned that he had no power to prevent him from doing so.

Seeing Richard Daly about to leave the room, he recalled him.

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"Where are you off to, in such a hurry? You might be wanted here."

"If you please, my lord, I am going to put an execution into Shadow Hall, according to your lordship's instructions," respectfully answered the agent.

"You are, are you?" burst forth the eccentric old man, in a voice much too strong for a sick-room. Then remembering himself, he lowered his tone, and continued, with suppressed indignation:

"You shall do nothing of the sort—FIRE YOU!—nothing of the sort! She is a widow, sir! And the Word of the Lord is heavy on the oppressor of the widow! Let her alone, unless you wish to leave my employment. And, see here! Go to the Hall, and send my housekeeper, Mrs. Stacks, here. Tell her to pack a valise for me, for I shall stay here. Take the carriage and fetch her. Mr. Daw is too ill to be moved, and I cannot leave him to these people!"

The agent was too well used to these eccentricities of the "crazy lord," as the old Briton was often called, to be in the least disturbed by his sudden change of purpose towards Mrs. Roslyn.

Lord John Daw engaged a room next his son's chamber; and he took all the doctor's directions, and seated himself by the bed to see that they were punctually followed.

On the arrival of Mrs. Stacks, a tall, spare, black-eyed, very wide-awake woman of forty, he installed her in his place, arranged for his carriage, horses and servants to remain at the hotel until further orders; and then he went to dinner in the public dining-room.

That night he sat late by his sick boy, listening to his ravings.

"What do you think of him, Stacks?" he inquired of his tall housekeeper.

"I think, my lord, as Mr. John is as ill as ill can be to

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live. And I think," added the woman, who had surreptitiously heard the "row" between the father and son on the subject of that obnoxious marriage, and who, being of a sentimental turn, had sympathized with the lovers— "I think, by the way he talks, as he has been crossed in love, as well."

"Humph! humph! humph! Lord bless my soul! How these boys torment one, to be sure! Poor fellow! Poor fellow! Do you think he will get over it, Stacks?" anxiously inquired the father.

"I hope so, my lord, I hope so. And I think if he could have his way it might be all the better for him. See, my lord, he is sleeping quietly enough now. He'll be likely to sleep this way till morning. If I might be so bold, my lord, I would advise your lordship to go and lie down and try to get some rest."

"I will, Stacks; but if there should be the least change in him you must come and wake me up. Be sure to do so, Stacks."

"I will indeed, my lord. Your lordship may trust me."

The old man went into the next room, and, with the assistance of his valet, who was awaiting him there, he undressed and went to bed, and after a long time to sleep.

He was not disturbed by any message from the patient. The place was so quiet that he slept late. When he awakened he arose at once, and without waiting to ring for his valet, he drew on his dressing-gown, thrust his feet in slippers, and stole on tiptoe into the sick room.

"How is he?" he whispered, hoarsely, approaching the bed; but his own eyes answered him. His son was lying there, no longer asleep, or flushed with fever, or muttering with delirium, but awake, pale and conscious.

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"He is much better this morning, my lord; his pulse is much lower, and—"

"I see. I see. I thank Heaven," breathed the old man, cutting short the housekeeper's words. Then bending over his son, he asked:

"Jack, my dear boy, how do you feel this morning?"

"A—little—faint. Slightly sick and dizzy, sir—that is all," answered the young man, in a feeble voice.

"Stacks, leave us for a few moments," said Lord John, sinking into the chair that the housekeeper had vacated for him at the head of the bed.

"Yes, my lord; and will get some nourishment ready for Mr. John while I am away," said the woman, leaving the room.

"Jack, lad, you feel better—a great deal better—than you did last night, don't you?"

"I don't know. I don't remember. I think I had a bad ague yesterday. I—I am only weak and—giddy now," feebly replied the young man.

"Jack, my boy, I want to tell you something before Stacks returns. Can you listen to me, Jack?"

"Yes," breathed the young man.

"Well, then, Jack, my lad, I withdraw my opposition to your marriage with Miss Lisburne. You may marry the young lady as soon as you like, Jack."

"God bless you, dear father!" said John Daw, as his heavy eyes and pale face lighted up with new life, and he reached out his arm and clasped the old man's hand fondly.

"Yes, yes, you shall, indeed, marry her just as soon as ever you like. After all, her father *was* a gentleman, though a poor one, eh, Jack?"

"Yes," faintly responded the young man.

"And for the matter of that, a wife always takes rank from her husband, you know, Jack."

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"Yes."

"And rises with him, you know, Jack."

"Yes."

"And now I ask, my dear boy, won't you try to get well as fast as ever you can, for my sake?"

"Yes."

"That is right."

But John Daw did not get well very fast. His fever rose again in the afternoon, and delirium set in in the evening.

And so the fever ran on for fourteen days before it would be broken; and then there was another fourteen days before the patient was able to leave the hotel.

It was on the first of April that John Daw, armed with his father's sanction to his suit, paid his first visit to Shadow Hall.

"All Fools' day is a very fitting one for that errand—very fitting, very fitting!" Lord John Daw had growled to himself; for, with his son's recovery to health, he could not see any particular reason for the *mesalliance*, though, being a man of honor, he could not now oppose it.

Mr. Daw asked first to see Mrs. Roslyn, who came in answer to his request, holding out both hands to welcome him.

The young gentleman presented his father's letter to Mrs. Roslyn, in which the old lord apologized to the lady for the words he had spoken on the occasion of his former visit, withdrew his opposition to the marriage then in question, and solicited the hand of her niece, Miss Lisburne, for his son, Mr. John Daw.

Zora Roslyn read the letter to the end, and then laughed merrily as she looked up at the waiting lover, who sat before her pale from recent illness.

"I must answer you, Mr Daw, as I answered your

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rather," she said—"by telling you that I really cannot see what I have to do with this—or he either, for that matter! It is an affair of yours and Eldiva's. She is in the garden, watching Old Biggs set out hyacinth and tulip bulbs. Go find her there, young gentleman."

Mr. John Daw seized the lady's hand and darted out of the house into the garden after his sweetheart.

That day the engagement was announced to the guests who were staying at the house.

A week later—at the earnest solicitation of the bridegroom elect, and for the accommodation of visitors who wished to remain to the wedding, but were obliged to return home by a certain time—an early day was fixed for the wedding—the first of May.

Zora Roslyn sacrificed her set of diamonds to obtain money for the wedding expenses, and she also pushed her credit as far as it would go, so that the orphan girl might have a good wedding outfit.

The relatives who were staying at the house were also very generous, and made the bride elect many presents—dress-patterns of India muslin, China crape, English chintz and French cambric—goods of that time.

Miss Grinnell, the fashionable dressmaker, was engaged. The women in the house took needles and thread and put on thimbles to assist in making up the wedding clothes.

It was arranged that the marriage ceremony should be performed in the Protestant Church at the Navy Yard, which was the one attended by the Roslyn family. Avonia Sothoron and Imperia North were to be bridesmaids—it was also understood that Captain Yorke and Lieutenant North were to officiate as groomsmen, and Mr. Wells was to give away the bride. After the ceremony at the church there was to be a reception and ball at the house, but at an early hour the bride and

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groom were to set out on their tour through the North.

They were to be escorted by their bridesmaids and groomsmen on the first short stage of their journey which would bring them the same night to the Wolf's Head Tavern.

On the morning of the wedding-day, while all the members of the household were busy at their individual affairs, little Nea stole down stairs and made her way to the flower garden, which she entered with great delight.

She felt the warmth of the morning sun ; she breathed the freshness of the dewy air ; she inhaled the fragrance of blossom and flower ; she heard the music of bird and bee. Yes ! and in her mind's eye she saw the beauties of form and color as she had seen them in the spring four years ago, before that terrible fever which had nearly cost her her life had really darkened her eyes through palsy of the optic nerve.

"I know where to find the moss-roses, and I think I could almost see them," murmured Nea to herself, as with her hands stretched out before her she glided slowly along the grass-grown walks between borders of wall-flowers, sweet williams, larkspurs, ragged robins, and other old-fashioned garden flowers, towards the arch where the moss-roses grew.

There they were ! a group of white and red moss-roses growing on each side of the honey-suckle arch that spanned the walk.

"I know the white from the red, too, by their smell. The white are the sweetest," she said, as she put forth her hands, gently, caressingly, and felt for the buds and drew them towards her face.

"These are red," she murmured, let them go and swing back to their parent stalks. "And these are white," she said, drawing others toward her, and trying

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to break off the twigs at the joints so as not to injure the rose-bush.

At this moment she heard a sound of foot-steps coming quickly down the walk, and an eager voice calling:

"Nea, Nea!"

The child started and sprang around with a gasp of joy, and in quick, spasmodic catches of her breath, cried out:

"Oh, Lance, Lance, Lance, Lance?" and then lost her voice in delight, and held out her arms eagerly to the youth who was hastening towards her.

Lancelot Roslyn was now a handsome young fellow of seventeen, well grown for his years, with a fresh complexion, dark gray eyes, and black hair. He wore a midshipman's uniform.

He caught the child up in his arms, and hugged and kissed her before he spoke again.

She was panting in ecstasy.

"Are you so glad to see me, Nea?" he asked, using the common phrase, although he knew she could not see him except in her "mind's eye."

"Oh, Lance! So glad! So glad!" she gasped for joy.

"And you did not expect to see me so soon, did you, Nea?"

"No—not till next month. But, oh! so glad! So glad!"

"Are you, Nea? *Can* you see me a little? How are the eyes, Nea?" he inquired, gazing into the soft, bright, brown orbs that were turned toward his *voice*.

The pathetic little face fell into a momentary sadness, and she did not reply at once.

"How are the eyes, Nea?" he inquired again.

"They are well, only they don't see—much. I can't *see* you, Lance, but I can *feel* you," she said, passing her

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hands over his face, and then suddenly throwing her arms around his neck and kissing him in delight.

"Were you here all alone, Nea?"

"Yes. Oh, Lance! So glad! So glad you've come home."

"Are you Nea? Who let you come out here alone?"

"Nobody let me. I came of myself. Oh, Lance? So glad!"

"Why did you come here by yourself, Nea?"

"Oh, to get white moss rosebuds for Eldiva's nosegay. How did you know I was here, Lance?"

"I saw you as I came through the alley. I came that way because I couldn't make any one hear me at the front door. Where are they all?"

"The servants, you mean?"

"Yes."

"Oh, Gad, who tends the door, is in the stable, cleaning off the carriage and currying the horse; Liza is waiting on the ladies up stairs; and Aunt Apple is getting breakfast, and Uncle Biggs is doing everything else in the world. And he says he is run off his feet and out of his senses. And so I wanted to help him; and I came out here to gather white moss-rose buds to make a nosegay that he had promised to get for Eldiva."

"Ah! but how is it that there is so much more to do now than there used to be? Is the house full of company?"

"Oh, yes; quite full. And, besides—oh! what *do* you think, Lance?" exclaimed the child, making up a little face full of mystery and importance.

"What, Nea?"

"Guess?"

"I never could."

"Well, then, Eldiva is going to be married this very day."

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"Eldiva!—going to be married!" exclaimed the youth losing his breath in astonishment.

"Yes indeed—this very day!"

"And who is the happy man?"

"What happy man?"

"The fellow she is going to marry."

"Oh! Mr. John Daw."

"Any kin to the old Lord?"

"Yes; his son."

"Poor Diva! I don't envy her her father-in-law."

"That is what everybody says. And, oh, Lance, I did try my best to persuade her not to take Mr. John Daw—to wait for you, and marry you. But, lor! she wouldn't take my advice."

"Thank you for thinking of me, little Nea. So Eldiva is to be married this morning, eh?"

"Oh, yes; that reminds me I must get my nosegay ready. And oh, Lance, if you have got a penknife in your pocket, please cut some white moss-rose buds for me."

"All right," said the youth, standing the child upon her feet, and drawing a clasp-knife from his pocket.

"Will these do, Nea?"

She passed both hands lightly over the rose-buds and exclaimed:

"Oh, yes; they are lovely. They feel so fresh, and smell so sweet."

"Come along then; let us go into the house," he said, as he lifted the child in his arms and carried her away out of the pleasant garden, away from the singing birds, and humming bees, and perfume-breathing flowers, into the kitchen, where they found Old Biggs, still in his shirt-sleeves, busy making the coffee—a feat in which he so much excelled the cook that he was always burdened with that duty in addition to all others.

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As Lance entered, with Nea seated on his right shoulder, and the bunch of white rose-buds in his left hand, Old Biggs stared until he recognized Lance, and then nearly dropped the coffee-pot in his astonishment.

"Lor' bress my po' ole brack soul, Marse Lance! Is dat you? To come on a po' ole body in that way, like a t'ief in de night! Yer made a cole faintness run down my back," said the old man, as he sat down on one of the wooden chairs to recover himself.

"Aint you glad to see me, Uncle Biggs?" laughed the young man, laying down his moss roses on a chair that he might offer his hand to the old fellow.

"Glad aint no word for it, Marse Lance! I's oberj'yed —I is!" cried Old Biggs, seizing and pressing the youth's hand between his own. "Why, it was only dis 'dentical mornin', wot ebber was, as I was a sayin' to Miss Nea how I wish Marse Lance was home. 'Talk ob de debbil an' his imps do appear.' It's de trufe, indeed! But I's mighty proud to see you, Marse Lance—I is dat!"

"Thank you, Uncle Biggs, both for your hearty welcome and the compliment implied in your quotation," laughed the youth. "Where is Aunt Apple?"

"Oh, she's gone to de hen-house arter fresh eggs for de quality's breakfus. Now 'scuse me, Marse, I got to 'tend to de quality's breakfus."

Old Biggs made the coffee, and then taking up the coffee pot in one hand and a plate of waffles in the other, he disappeared through a door on the north of the fireplace leading into a little pantry and thence into the dining-room.

"Tell me if these are right, Lance?" the child Nea inquired, as she held up the white moss-rose buds which she had arranged into a lovely bouquet.

"Yes, you wonderful little fairy—perfect! Why, Nea,

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you must have sight at the tips of your little fingers!" exclaimed the youth.

The child laughed her rare, sweet laugh, and said:

"Now get me a glass of water, and I will set them by Eldiva's plate, so that she can see them when she comes down to breakfast."

The young midshipman complied with her request, and Nea, carrying the glass with the flowers in one hand, felt her way with the other towards the door leading into the pantry and through that into the dining-room. Lance followed her. He *had* felt as if he had been away from home for a century, yet when he looked around him it seemed as if he had not been absent for a day.

Feeling her way around the edge of the table, Nea found Eldiva's usual place and put the glass containing the bouquet next her plate.

Old Biggs began to ring the iron bell with all his might, and before the clangor ceased the family and guests began to file into the room through the doors communicating with the drawing-room in front.

And *then* there was astonishment and uproar!

They crowded around the young midshipman, all voices mingling in wild delight of welcome. All hands were extended at once, and nothing heard but—

"Lance!"

"Lance!"

"Lance!"

"When did you get here!"

"God bless you, boy!"

"Oh, what a joyful surprise this is!"

Zora Roslyn caught him away from all the rest and hugged and kissed him, with tears and smiles as hearty and sincere as if she had been his own mother instead of his step-dame.

It was full ten minutes before the tumult was all over

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and Lance had explained to all questioners the favoring accidents of wind and weather that had sent him home sooner than he was expected.

Then they sat down to breakfast, Lance taking Nea's place and lifting the child upon his lap.

It was a large party that gathered around that table for besides Zora Roslyn, her child, her niece and her step-son, there was Mr. and Mrs. Wells, Mr. Neil Carnes, Miss Sothoron, Mr. Verne, Miss North, and Miss Grinnell.

After enjoying the attractive and appetizing repast the company arose and separated to their several rooms to dress for the wedding ceremony.

CHAPTER IV.

THE WEDDING.

The large front chamber on the right or south side of the Well's apartments had been given up as a dressing-room to [illegible]er bridesmaids, and here they assembled.

[illegible]l, had already made the two beds, and [illegible] snow-white marseilles counterpanes were laid [illegible]inery.

On one [illegible]ed the bridal dress, a costly gown of rich white Canton crape embroidered in white silk, a fine Brusselles lace vail, long white kid gloves, and white kid boots—the whole presented by old Mr. Wells. There was an ivory fan, the gift of Mrs. Wells; a set of pearls, the offering of the bridegroom elect, and a crown of orange flowers from Avonia Sothoron.

On the other bed lay a variety of dresses of soft bright colors—Canton crepes in rose, azure and canary, white

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brocades embroidered in flowers in their natural hues, brilliant India silk and English chintzes.

Liza stood by this bed carefully folding these dresses and laying them in an open trunk that stood at the foot.

Eldiva, the bride elect, sat before a white-draped toilet-table that stood between the two white-curtained front windows. The tall toilet glass reflected a very pale face. She had been grave and silent all the morning. She had scarcely greeted her old playmate Lance, when she had met him so unexpectedly in the breakfast room. She had not noticed by any word of acknowledgment the beautiful bouquet of white moss-rose buds that little blind Nea had placed beside her plate. She had merely picked it up in an absent-minded manner, and brought it to her room.

Avonia, who stood at the back of her chair, arranging her hair, suddenly interrupted :

" What is the matter with you, Diva ? You are as glum as a mud-turtle with its head drawn in. Now, who has walked over your feelings this morning ?"

" No one, Ava ; every one is as kind to me as possible—much kinder than they need be," replied the girl.

" Then, what on earth ails you ? Something does, that is evident."

" I *am* depressed, *awfully* depressed."

" What about ?"

" I do not know, unless—"

" Unless what ?"

" I do not like to say—unless it was a dream I had," murmured the girl, in a half-audible tone.

" A dream !" exclaimed Avonia, dropping her hair-brush.

" A dream !" cried Imperia, leaving her task of tacking flowers upon the wedding-dress, and coming forward.

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"Dream!" muttered Liza, laying down the robe she had been folding and creeping up behind.

For remarkable dreams and every form of the supernatural had an unacknowledged fascination for these young creatures, ladies as well as maid.

"Yes, a dream," sighed the bride elect—"and one really should not mind dreams, you know."

"But what was it?" inquired Avonia.

"I don't like to speak of it! I don't like to think of it!" shuddered Eldiva.

"If you will only tell us, you will get it off your mind," said Avonia, diplomatically.

And after some persuasion, seeing that her companions would not rest until their curiosity was satisfied, Eldiva told her dream.

"I dreamed that I was lying wide awake, but with my eyes closed to rest them, when there came slowly and softly upon my perceptions the consciousness of some unearthly presence approaching me, and then that the presence was that of a woman. I heard the low trailing of her robe as she glided towards me; I heard her low breathing; then I saw the shadowy form of a beautiful, pale woman, with mournful dark eyes, and a vail of long, black hair that swept down upon a red robe that draped her form and glowed like a dull fire. While I seemed so spell-bound as to be incapable of speech or motion, she stooped over me and whispered:

"'*Eldiva!*'

"I could not answer—I could scarcely breathe—while the shade continued:

"'Goddess of Eld! you are here again to repeat the oft-enacted tragedy! Old goddess, you were warned, but you would not take the warning. You would not, for you were doomed to work out the expiation of the old sin.

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'Errors many, sorrows rife,
Once a bride never a wife,' "

"With these words, the dread shade lifted itself like a cloud and disappeared in the darkness. I breathed freely again, but I slept no more last night.

"There!" exclaimed Eldiva, with a brighter look, as if in the telling of her dream she had really got the nightmare off her mind. "That was all. I might account for that dream, for, as I said, I do not believe in the supernatural, and I really do think that loss of sleep has had more to do with my low spirits this morning than anything else. Go on with my hair, Ava."

But a gravity had fallen upon them that they could not throw off. They seemed even too heavily oppressed to make any comments on the weird adventure of the bride elect.

Avonia solemnly resumed her hair-dressing.

Imperia gravely returned to her graceful task of tucking sprigs of orange flowers about the draperies of the wedding dress.

Liza, solemnly shaking her head, went back to her packing.

Avonia was the first to break the silence, but she talked without stopping work.

"I have heard that prophetic couplet before to-day, Eldiva," she whispered, as she twisted the girl's dark hair into glossy ropes and wound them into a rich knot at the nape of the neck.

"Yes, of course you have, and so have I, often. You know I told you that I thought I could account for my dream, and I meant that it was made up by my memory of that couplet and of the red-robed woman's ghost that is said to haunt the house."

"Oh, I see."

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"*I* never heard that couplet before. What about it?" inquired Imperia North, turning her head without stopping her work.

"Give me my white kid gaiters, now, Ava, and I will tell her while I put them on," said the bride elect.

Avonia, who had finished the hair-dressing, went and brought the white boots, and Eldiva began her tale of old times.

"I do not think," she said, "that there is a family in the world, who has so ancient a legend as my mother's had, which was said to have been of Roman origin."

"Everybody can see the Italian blood in you, now, Eldiva," said Imperia.

"Perhaps! Well it has been handed down by tradition that in the days of old pagan Rome, a daughter of our house was a priestess of Vesta, who broke her vows and ran away with a young Roman soldier; but before they could be married she was pursued, captured, and burned alive in expiation of her sacrilege. The old couplet is said to have been first written of her in the Latin tongue."

"But there was a more modern ancestress of yours who came to grief on her wedding day to whom the couplet was applied," said Avonia.

"Not an *ancestress*, my dear! Don't you see that a woman to whom that prophecy referred, or in whom it was fulfilled, could ever have been an ancestress—

Once a bride, but never a wife—,

don't you see?"

"Oh, yes! but if not an ancestress, who then was she?"

"Another daughter of our house, whose name I bear, and whose portrait, still in existence, I am said closely to resemble. She lived a hundred years ago, and on her

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wedding day there came up a fearful thunder storm and the bridegroom was struck dead by lightning at the side of his bride as they were leaving the altar. She never got over the shock, though she lived to a great age and devoted her life to learning and to good works. In her latter days—partly from the awe she everywhere inspired and partly from her name—Eldiva—she was called 'The Old Goddess.' Now you can see, dear girls, how the memory of this old legend, connecting with the impression of this silly story of the red-robed woman, must have influenced my imagination and governed my dream. Come! I feel better now!" concluded Eldiva.

Active fingers had been busy during this short recital, and now Imperia brought the decorated wedding-dress for the bride to put on.

Half an hour later the whole party were ready; the bride in her rich and elegant dress of white embroidered Canton crepe, Brusselles lace vail, pearls and orange flowers; the bridemaids in their White India muslin robes, tulle vails, and white roses.

The last glove was scarcely buttoned, however, before Mrs. Roslyn knocked at the door and then came in.

Zora had dropped her widow's weeds for the occasion, and now appeared in a silver-gray silk suit, with hat and feathers, gloves, and vail to match.

Mutual compliments were paid to each other's toilets, and then the elderly lady said if they were ready they had better go down, as the carriages had been waiting for ten minutes.

A drive of fifteen minutes brought them to the church, where a large crowd of people were assembled.

The bride's procession formed in the vestibule, entered by the middle door, and went up the middle aisle.

Mrs. Roslyn and Mr. Carnes led the way. The two bridesmaids followed together. Old Mr. Wells, with the

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bride on his arm, brought up the rear. Lance Roslyn, leading little Nea, followed at a distance.

When the little procession reached the altar the bridegroom and his party, who were grouped on the right, immediately came forward.

The rector, the Rev. Mr. Allan, opened the prayer-book and commenced the marriage ceremony after the ritual of the Protestant Episcopal Church.

The imposing ceremony went on to its conclusion, and the newly married pair received the congratulations of their friends, and then went into the vestry to sign the register.

When this form had been complied with, the party left the church and re-entered the carriages.

On the arrival of the wedding party at Shadow Hall, the bride and bridesmaids immediately retired to change their dress for dinner.

The bride's dinner dress was a light blue brocade, with white embroidered lilies, a lily in her dark hair, and one on her bosom, and a pair of solitaire diamond ear-rings, the gift of Lord John Daw.

The first bridesmaid, Imperia North, wore a rose-colored China crape, and the second one, pale green Irish gauze.

These were all the fashionable dress fabrics of the day.

The dinner party assembled in the front drawing-room. The table was laid in the large, front dining-room to the right.

The two old gentlemen who were most interested in the feast, Lord John Daw and Mr. Jubal Wells, had scarcely time to become impatient, when Old Biggs opened the communicating door and announced dinner.

After dinner the ladies all left the gentlemen to their

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wine, and retired to change their dress once more—for the ball of the evening.

The bride and her bridesmaids resumed the white robes and white flowers they had worn at the wedding ceremony, but the bride did not wear her vail.

When ready they went down into the drawing-room, which was ablaze with the light of many wax candles.

The large dining-room on the right had been cleared for the dancers. The floor had been waxed and chalked, and the whole brilliantly illuminated.

And now was heard the negro band of musicians tuning their instruments as they were seated on a temporary elevated platform at the further extremity of the room.

The company began to arrive at an hour which, in this age, would be considered preposterously early, and by eight o'clock all the rooms were filled.

The bride and groom, standing with their attendants near the door of the front drawing-room, had received the congratulations of every group of visitors, before the latter passed into the ball-room.

The ball was to be opened by them at eight o'clock.

When that hour struck, the wedding party proceeded to the ball-room, and the wedding march was played.

There was first a promenade and after that a quadrille, in which the bride, groom, bridesmaids and groomsmen formed a set together.

When this was finished, and ladies were resting and gentlemen fanning them, or bringing glasses of water, the bridal set slipped out, one by one, so as not to be observed, and went up stairs to prepare for their journey.

Eldiva's trunks were packed up and were to be sent on to Baltimore by the next morning's stage-coach.

A small portmanteau, filled with requisites for her journey, was all that she meant to encumber herself with in her carriage. Her travelling dress was a simple silver

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gray poplin, with hat, feather, vail and gloves to match. Her bridesmaids wore gray merino.

They all dressed in the same large front chamber before mentioned.

They were soon ready, but before they went down stairs, they held a little parting reception there of ten minutes duration.

Mr. and Mrs. Wells and Mrs. Roslyn came in to say good-bye.

"You two girls and your escorts will be back to-night, I suppose?" said Mrs. Wells, addressing the bridesmaids and referring to the groomsmen.

"Oh, yes, to be sure! We only go with the 'happy pair' as a 'guard of honor' so far as the Wolf's Head, which is the first stage of their journey, and where they will put up until morning. And when we have seen them safely housed we will return. It will be very late, however," said Imperia North, as she drew on her gray gloves.

While this conversation was going on, Zora Roslyn drew the bride a little way off, and after fondly kissing and blessing her, said:

"Come now, Eldiva, come into my room and kiss little Nea good-by. She has gone to bed two hours ago, but you can kiss her in her sleep."

And the lady drew her niece into the adjoining room, and thence down three broad steps into the back chamber occupied by herself and her little daughter.

Nea was fast asleep on the great four-post bedstead.

Eldiva stooped and kissed her softly, whispering:

"Good-by, my darling! God bless you, my sweet, sweet darling."

Nea awoke to half-consciousness, put her arms around her cousin's neck, and held her fast muttering, with faltering tongue and fast-closed eyes:

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"Don't—don't go, Diva! Oh, Diva, don't, don't go!"

Eldiva gently unclasped the clinging arms, kissed her softly again, and turned away.

Were the sleeping child's words accidental, or were they previsionary? she asked herself, with a superstitious shiver, as she remembered her warning dream.

She followed her aunt back to the room where she had left her companions.

"They have sent to know if we are ready, Eldiva," said Imperia North.

"Well, I am ready now! Once more, dear Aunt Zora! my second mother!" exclaimed the bride, throwing herself into the arms of her protectress for a last embrace.

"God bless you, Diva! Go now, the gentlemen are growing impatient," replied Mrs. Roslyn, kissing her niece, and turning away to conceal her tears.

The three young ladies went down stairs, and were met in the hall by the three gentlemen who took them out to the carriages.

There stood two before the door, with their horses snorting in the night air.

In the first one, which was Mr. John Daw's handsome travelling carriage, the bridegroom handed his bride, and then entered and placed himself by her side.

In the second one, which was the family carriage of the Roslyns, the two groomsmen handed their fair companions, and then seated themselves on the cushions opposite.

The carriages started—that of the newly-wedded pair taking the lead.

The full moon was just rising in the east, and flashing a path of life across the dark current of the Anacostia River.

"They will have a beautiful moonlight drive through

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the wood!" exclaimed Lancelot Roslyn, as he lifted an old slipper in each hand and threw them after the carriages, which were rolling rapidly away towards the north on their night journey to their ill-fated halting-place—the never-to-be-forgotten Wolf's Head Inn.

Lancelot Roslyn, and all the others who had come out upon the pavement to see the travellers off, now returned within the house, and the doors and windows were closed, and dancing re-commenced with renewed enthusiasm.

The ball was kept up to a very late hour.

At midnight supper was served, and after that the music and dancing was resumed and continued until daylight.

As morning dawned and the guests began to drop off, Zora Roslyn grew anxious for the return of the bridesmaids and groomsmen, who had volunteered as a "guard of honor" to see the bride and groom to the end of the first stage of their journey.

But the last couple had left the floor, and the sable musicians were putting their instruments in green baize bags preparatory to their departure; yet still there was no sign of the returning parties. When all were gone the lights were put out, and the red glow on the eastern horizon, reflected warmly on the waters of the Anacostia, heralded the rising of the sun, Zora Roslyn still lingered in the deserted rooms with no other companion but Lance.

"It is very strange that they do not come. They should have been back two hours ago. I hope they have not changed their minds about coming home and concluded to stay all night at the Wolf's Head. It would have been improper—*very* improper—*highly* improper!" exclaimed Mrs. Roslyn.

"They've come at last!" exclaimed Lance, as a per-

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emptory knock, or succession of knocks, struck upon his ears.

And as no servant was astir he ran to open the door.

Zora Roslyn, who was very tired, sat down in an arm-chair to await the entrance of her young friends.

What did she hear?

Voices in subdued confusion, low exclamations, lamentations!

She started up in terror, and ran out to see what misfortune had happened.

Ah! it was a calamity that her most extravagant fears had not leaped to divine.

"Stand aside! let us bring her in," said the commanding voice of Captain Milo Yorke, as, with the help of Lieut. North, he supported the fainting form of some young woman, and led her slowly from the carriage towards the door.

"ELDIVA!" Zora exclamed, in utter amazement, as she recognized the bride.

The two gentlemen passed on to the drawing-room and carefully laid their burden on the broad sofa under the front windows.

Zora Roslyn turned in consternation to the two pale and trembling girls.

"Imperia! Avonia! what in Heaven's name has occurred?"

"Oh, for the Lord's sake, don't ask, auntie, don't!" cried Avonia, wringing and twisting her fingers, while Imperia bit her lips in silence.

"Is—any one hurt or killed?"

"No, no—nothing like that."

"What then?"

"Oh, auntie! for the love of mercy don't ask me! Besides, we don't any of us rightly know!"

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"Where is Mr. John Daw!" suddenly inquired the lady.

"Gone!"

"*Gone?*"

"Yes, gone."

"Where?"

"We don't know."

"I believe you are all mad together! Why did he go?"

"We don't exactly know. Something horrible happened in the night at the Wolf's Head—we don't know what. Oh, pray, *pray* ask no more questions! Let us go to Eldiva," pleaded Avonia.

The rapid cross-questioning of the girls had not taken more than one minute.

And now, Mrs. Roslyn, anxious as any one else for the safety of her niece, followed them into the drawing-room.

We must go back a few hours to the time when the two carriages containing the wedding party left Shadow Hall for their night ride to the Wolf's Head Tavern, which they reached about eleven o'clock.

The tavern presented a gay scene. The house was lighted up, for the wedding party was expected, and all the lodgers had waited up to witness their arrival.

Besides this, two great stage-coaches were before the door—one from Washington, the other from Baltimore.

Mr. John Daw, very much annoyed at that unexpected publicity given to his nuptials, handed his bride from the carriage, and led her, with her vail down, into the house, where they were politely met by the host, and conducted to the private parlor previously engaged for them.

"I hope you are not fatigued, love," inquired the bridegroom, in a low whisper.

"Oh, not at all," replied the lady, with a smile.

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"Will you please to have supper, sir?" inquired the host.

"I—I will send an order in a few minutes. Pray do not wait," answered the guest.

And the landlord bowed and left the room.

His exit was immediately followed by the entrance of the bridesmaids and groomsmen.

They came in laughing and talking merrily, and threw themselves down on sofas, or into chairs.

"Yorke," said the bridegroom, "I wish you would see the landlord and order supper for our party. Tell them to serve it here."

"All right," said Milo Yorke, springing up gayly and going out.

A waiter entered almost immediately and laid the cloth.

Supper was served promptly; for, in fact, everything had been anticipated for the party, and for all description, it is sufficient to say that the repast was worthy of the famous Wolf's Head Tavern.

When it was over, Eldiva retired to her room accompanied by her bridesmaids, who took an affectionate leave of her and returned to the parlor. The gentlemen were taking a parting glass of champagne, and Mr. Daw, on being told that Eldiva had retired, said:

"I will take her up a glass. I will not be gone five minutes. Wait for me."

And he poured out a fresh glass of wine and hurried away with it while it was still foaming and sparkling.

"Come," said Milo Yorke, "we must empty these before the wine is flat."

The two gentlemen lifted their glasses.

At that moment, a piercing scream was heard from above stairs, followed by another and another in quick succession.

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The young people in the private parlor sprang to their feet, pale and frightened, looking at each other and then at the door, as if they were, for an instant, uncertain what to do.

But as the screams continued, the two gentlemen, started to run to the scene of action. They had just reached the parlor door when it was burst violently open by the bridegroom, who rushed into the room with the aspect of a maniac.

"In the name of Heaven, what has happencd ? Is it anything to Eldiva? Where is Eldiva?" demanded Imperia North, who was the first to find the use of her tongue.

"She was not in her room," answered the bridegroom, in a husky voice.

"But where is she ?—where ?" reiterated Imperia.

A sudden change came over John Daw. By a supreme effort of self-control he became calm; but it was with the calmness and coldness of a statue.

"Silence!" he said, sternly and icily, "Never name her in my presence again. The man, or woman, who shall venture to do so will insult me!"

The young people gazed from him to each other in a consternation that deprived them, for the time being, of speech.

The wild screams had ceased, but the whole house was now in commotion.

A waiter entered the room, his face was gray and scared.

"Go to the stables and tell the people there to put my horses to the carriage and bring it around to the door. I return to Washington to-night," said Mr. Daw, throwing himself into a chair, for he seemed no longer able to stand.

The frightened waiter ran out to do his errand.

"You go to Washington to-night!" said Captain

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Yorke, recovering his speech, and addressing Mr. Daw.

"Yes—and *alone*," replied the latter firmly and sternly, meeting the eyes of the first speaker.

"And—*your wife*?" significantly inquired the young officer.

"I have no *wife!* Thank Heaven I have no *wife!* And I repeat, sir! and you will do well to listen and remember—that I shall consider the man or the woman who shall venture to name in my presence her who *was* to have been my wife, will offer me a willful insult—and one which I shall surely meet as it deserves," answered Mr. Daw.

"If you are not quite mad, perhaps you will be so kind as to give some explanation of your strange--your outrageous conduct to us—the friends of the young lady whom you—"

"I can give *you* no explanation, Captain Yorke. When I get back to the city I shall drop a note to Mr. Wells and ask him to call upon me. To him I will explain what has happened to-night, so far as I can explain it."

At this moment the landlady, who had been roused out of her bed, and had dressed herself in a hurry, put her head in at the door and said:

"If you are the friends of the bride up stairs, as I suppose you are, you had better, some of you. go up to her room; for to be plain with you, I believe she is dying."

"Gracious Heaven, what *has* happened to her? Come, Imperia! Come at once! *She* will tell us!' exclaimed Avonia, impetuously rushing out of the room.

Miss North was following quickly, when her brother arrested her steps.

"*We* will not intrude. We must not," he said, alluding to himself and Captain Yorke; "but if we can be of any service let us know at once."

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"Yes, yes!" said Imperia hurrying away.

Wheels were heard drawing up before the door, and horses snorting discontently.

A waiter entered the room and said:

"Your carriage waits, sir."

"Good night, gentlemen," said Mr. Daw, taking up his hat and gloves. "You will find me at 'The Hill,' whenever you may want me, and if one of you could contrive to give me the *coup-de-grace*, I should feel infinitely obliged to you."

Mr. Daw left the room, and a few minutes later his carriage was heard rolling away.

In the meantime the two girls had followed the landlady up stairs and into the very same chamber in which they had left Eldiva safe and well two hours before.

She had got back to the room, at all events.

She was lying on the outside of the bed, with face as white as the dressing-gown she wore. Her eyes were staring straight at the ceiling. Her features were drawn and sharp.

Avonia was the first to reach her side.

"Eldiva!" she whispered, bending low to the death-like face. "How is it with you, dear?"

The fixed, stained eyeballs slowly softened and turned to meet the kind eyes looking on her, and she answered in a low moan:

"I am lost! I am lost! Oh, take me home! Take me home!"

"Do you know me, dear Eldiva?" coaxed Avonia, fearing that her friend was wandering in mind.

"Oh! yes, yes, but take me home! Oh! take me home!" moaned the poor bride.

"Speak to her, Imperia," groaned Avonia, giving place to Miss North.

Imperia bent over Eldiva and inquired:

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"Can you tell us—your true friends—what troubles you?"

"No, No; but take me home! Oh, take me home!" moaned the bride.

"I think a doctor ought to be sent for," said Avonia.

"A doctor has been sent for, Miss, nearly three-quarters of an hour ago, and as he don't live more than a half a mile down the road, I expect him here every minute."

At that moment a waiter opened the door and ushered in the doctor.

The landlady turned and greeted him as Dr. Brewer, and began an eager and voluminous account of how she had been "rousted" up by hearing the screams, and upon throwing on her clothes and running into the passage, she had found this lady walking wildly up and down and raving like a mad woman, and how she had lifted her up, for she was but a "light little creetur," and had carried her to this bed, where she soon fell into exhaustion.

"Hysterics," said the doctor, laconically, with his hand upon the patient's pulse.

"Oh, Doctor, no, I think not, sir! She has had some dreadful shock," put in the landlady.

"Ay, doubtless; but this is hysterics, from whatever cause.—What has troubled you, my dear?" inquired the old doctor, in a fatherly manner, as he bent over his strange patient.

"I cannot tell you. Oh, no, no, I cannot tell you! Send me home! Oh, tell them to take me home!" pleaded the young woman, in an access of excitement.

The doctor asked for a glass and a spoon, and while the landlady went to fetch them he opened his saddle-bag and selected certain composing cordials.

These he mixed, and of the compound gave the patient half a wine glass full.

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She took it obediently, and in returning the glass renewed her petition :

"Oh, Doctor, tell them to take me home !"

"I see no objection when it is light enough for you to travel safely," replied the physician.

Then he beckoned the landlady to follow him out in the passage.

When the two were alone there outside the closed door, the doctor said.

"I think the sooner she is placed in the care of her family and friends the better. She is barely able to endure the drive back to Washington now. She may not be able to do so a few hours hence."

"I—I hope you are not going away so soon, sir."

"No, I shall remain here to see the lady off. Indeed, I think I shall accompany her as far on her way as Bladensburg, where I have to look in upon a patient—if you will give me a bit of early breakfast before I go."

"Certainly I will, sir. And the young ladies and gentlemen would be glad of a cup of coffee, too, before they start out in the airly morning."

An hour later, the young people, having packed up their effects, prepared the poor bride for her journey, and then breakfasted and set out on their return to the city.

Only the three young ladies occupied the capacious carriage, in which Imperia and Avonia supported the half fainting form of Eldiva.

The two gentlemen hired horses from the stables of the Wolf's Head, and the doctor rode his own fat cob.

Eldiva never opened her eyes, or uttered one word, during the entire journey.

At Bladensburg Dr. Brewer parted company with

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them, warning them not to worry their suffering companion with questions.

The young ladies promised not to do so.

How the party reached Shadow Hall has been told.

CHAPTER V.

THE BRIDE'S RETURN.

Mrs. Roslyn, in the deepest distress and confusion, overwhelmed the young ladies with questions that they could not answer; but in the midst of all this the condition of her niece called for immediate attention.

With the help of the two young ladies poor Eldiva was carried up stairs to that fine front bedroom in the southern half of the double house which was held in reserve for high occasions, and which had been the scene of the bride's toilet on that wedding morning. It was now the only unoccupied room.

Here they undressed Eldiva and put her to bed, while the messenger who had been dispatched for the family physician hurried away on his errand.

Eldiva had spoken but once since her return. Seeing Mrs. Roslyn bending over her with a face full of tenderness, she murmured:

"Oh! Aunt Zora, your poor Diva is lost—is lost!"

"Do not distress yourself, my dear child. You are with friends who love you," softly answered the lady, as she stooped and kissed her niece.

Eldiva sighed and closed her eyes. Her face was deadly white, her lips blue, her pulse imperceptible.

After a while Mrs. Roslyn whispered to her two companions:

"Stay with her, dear girls, until my return. I hear Aunt and Uncle Wells moving down stairs. I must go

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and sit at the head of the breakfast table, I suppose; but I will be back as soon as possible."

"Oh, do not hurry on our account, dear auntie. We had a cup of coffee before we left the Wolf's Head," whispered Avonia.

"And oh, listen!" murmured the lady, in the same hushed tone; "do not breathe to a soul that there has been any—any—misunderstanding between the bride and groom. Say to all inquirers that there has been an accident—as there well might be in a night drive over a country road—and that *both* were hurt, though we hope not seriously; and that she was brought here for the present, and *he* carried to his father's house. Oh, great heaven! that I should have to prevaricate so to prevent a scandal! Yet, this is the truth, so far as it goes. Clearly, something has happened—both are hurt in spirit if not in body—and she is here, and he at his father's. Yes, that is the truth, so far as it goes."

The two young girls promised strict compliance with her wishes and she passed swiftly and silently out of the room.

In the dining room below she found Mr. and Mrs. Wells, full of life and gayety, notwithstanding their threescore and ten years. *They* had no suspicion of anything unpleasant having happened. They had just come down from their bed-room.

Mr. Wells stood, in his white linen suit, on the hearth, with his back to the fireplace, in which bloomed a large china jar full of pink, blue and white larkspurs and asparagus blossoms. Mrs. Wells had already seated herself at the table.

Mr. Neil Carnes came sauntering in, half asleep, followed by Mr. Phœbus Verne, who held his hand before his mouth, to conceal an irrepressible yawn.

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Both these gentlemen had just come down, and were as yet ignorant of the untoward event of the morning.

Old Biggs brought in the breakfast, and waited at the table. Old Biggs and all the other servants had been in bed and asleep at the time of the bride's unexpected return, and had not yet discovered it.

No one, it will be remembered, had been up at the time except Mrs. Roslyn and her step-son, Lance.

"Our young folks are too much fatigued to join us this morning," said Mr. Neil Carnes.

"Oh! yes," replied Zora Roslyn, with as much indifference as she could assume.

Breakfast over, the guests wandered out into the porch.

Old Mr. Wells lighted his pipe and walked out into the garden.

Zora Roslyn went up into the room where she had left Eldiva, watched by the two girls. The poor bride lay motionless as before.

"She is sleeping, or she may be. I would not disturb her if I were you, auntie," whispered Avonia.

"Will you two go down and get some breakfast now?"

"Oh! no, I assure you we breakfasted before leaving the Wolf's Head," answered Imperia, for herself and her companion.

"Dear Heaven! how forgetful I am! This shocking affair has quite distracted me!" suddenly exclaimed Mrs. Roslyn.

"What is it, auntie?"

"Oh! I forgot all about the gentlemen—Captain Yorke and Lieutenant North. I should have sent for them to come in to breakfast," said Mrs. Roslyn, in a tone of vexation.

"Oh! they have both gone. I saw them from the front window walk away together," explained Avonia.

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Zora Roslyn then again left the room and went down stairs to her guests. There was a back door leading from the front hall to that side porch where they were assembled. As she entered the porch Old Biggs came to her, saying, as he handed a penciled note:

"It was left by the gentleman, ma'am."

Zora Roslyn opened it and read.

It was merely a note of a few lines from Lieut. North, saying that they—himself and his companion—were going back to their posts of duty, but would be silent as to the affair of the preceding night, and would hold themselves in readiness to serve her or any member of her family, in any way in their power.

Mrs. Roslyn put the note in her pocket, seated herself in a little, low straw chair, and said:

"I—I have something to tell you all that I did not like to tell at the table, for fear it would spoil your appetite."

"There has been an accident."

"AN ACCIDENT!" exclaimed her hearers in one voice, rising in alarm.

"Yes, an accident might have almost been expected in a night drive from here to the Wolf's Head—"

"Who was hurt?" demanded old Mr. Wells, who had thrown the ashes out of his pipe and was leaning over the garden gate.

"The bride and groom are both hurt, but not seriously, I believe. She was brought home here as the best place to receive careful nursing. He was taken to his father's house."

"Gracious Heaven! How did it all happen?" demanded Mr. Wells.

"I do not know the particulars. All I can gather is that an accident has happened; the bride and groom are both hurt; she has been brought home to me to be

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nursed, and he has been carried to his father's house. And that is all," concluded Zora Roslyn.

And that was the story, told, not only to the guests, but to the servants in the house, and to the neighbors who called during the forenoon,—all of whom were full of surprise, sympathy and commiseration at this unexpected interruption to the wedding journey.

It was the story told even to the doctor, who called a half hour later, and who, whatever his doubts and suspicions might have been—*being a doctor*—discreetly kept them to himself.

A little later in the forenoon, a mounted groom from "The Hill" rode up to Shadow Hall, delivered a sealed note to Old Biggs to be conveyed to Mr. Wells, and saying that he was not to wait for an answer, rode off again.

Old Biggs went into the porch, where now Mr. Wells sat alone reading the morning paper—the *National Intelligencer*—and delivered the note and the message.

The old gentleman opened the note and read it with amazement and consternation; and then carrying it open in his hand, he arose and went, with a face full of dismay, to seek Zora Roslyn.

He found the lady in the little pantry between the kitchen and the dining-room, giving out preserved fruit and spices, and sugar for the pudding.

Both doors being open, he saw her at once and beckoned her to join him.

Alarmed by the expression on his face, she dropped all that she had in hand and came to him at once.

"For the Lord's sake, my dear," he said, "come out in the garden, where we shall be safe from interruption, and tell me what in the very deuce is the meaning of all this?—that is, if you *can* do so!"

"What is it? What is that note you have got in your

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hand?" she inquired, as they walked towards the garden gate.

"It is from Daw. Something frightful—something most deplorable has occurred at the Wolf's Head! Not the common accident of the road, as we were led to suppose," he said, as he took the way to the circular summer house.

"For Heaven's sake what is it?" she panted, turning pale, as she dropped upon one of the benches. "I dreaded some misfortune by the way in which Eldiva returned home. Yet still I hoped it might be something that could be set right before it became generally known. Oh, what is it?"

"I cannot tell you specifically. I—well, he reserves particulars for a personal interview, to which he invites me this morning. Here, let me read his letter.

"THE HILL, *May 2d*, 18—.

"TO JUBAL WELLS, ESQ.—*My Dear Sir:* I owe an explanation to Miss Lisburne's family, which, in consideration for her and for them, I have forborne to give to others.

"As it would now be an indecorum for me to intrude at Shadow Hall, I must beg you to come up to The Hill for a conference, in which you will see that the course taken by me last night was the only course left open to a man of honor, under the circumstances.

"When you shall have received my version of the affair you may appeal to her for its confirmation. Finally, if you think proper, you may make the whole story public, though I cannot suppose that you will do so. As for myself, and for the lady's sake, to all except yourself I shall continue to be, as I have been, absolutely silent, allowing the world to judge me as it must, and condemn me as it will.

"Waiting your pleasure, sir, I have the honor to remain, your most obedient servant.

"JOHN DAW"

"There, that's the letter! Now what do you think of

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it?" continued Mr. Wells, as he folded the paper and thrust it into his pocket.

"I think it is enough to break one's heart and craze one's brain," cried Zora Roslyn.

"But what do you suppose it is all about?"

"I do not know. I have thought about it so much that if I were to think much longer I should go crazy!"

"Then don't think any more. I shall go around to the stable and have Peggy put to the carriage and drive up to The Hill and hear the worst at once."

"Do, Uncle Wells. Oh! what a world to live in!"

Half an hour later Mr. Wells drove off to The Hill. He did not stay long on his errand—and such an errand.

In less than two hours from the moment of his departure he re-entered Shadow Hall.

Zora Roslyn, who was watching for him, ran to open the front door, and taking his hand, drew him into the drawing-room, which was vacant, and closed and locked the door to prevent interruption.

Then she forced the old gentleman down in a chair and looked at him.

He was very pale and grave; up to this time he had not spoken since his entrance into the house.

"Well, well, well!" impatiently exclaimed Zora Roslyn.

Uncle Jubal took his handkerchief from his pocket and wiped his face as if to gain time.

"Well, well, well!" again impatiently exclaimed Zora Roslyn.

"Well, my dear, I can tell you no more than what you know already," said the old gentleman, with a deep sigh of pain.

"What! Did not *he* tell you, John Daw?" exclaimed the lady, in surprise.

"Yes, he told me all—everything. It was my right to

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know it, and he told it. A great misfortune has happened, Zora; but *that* you knew already. A misfortune that has separated the young married pair forever; and that in the eyes of all right-thinking men *should* separate them forever."

"Great Heaven! Whose fault was it? *His* or hers?"

"It was neither his fault nor hers. Now that he is calmer he attaches no blame to her whatever. It was not their fault. It was their stupendous and irreparable misfortune," groaned the old gentleman.

"But, for Heaven's sake, tell me the nature of this misfortune!" the lady besought.

"I *cannot*, Zora. You know now all that you or any one will ever know of the calamity that occurred last night to separate the young pair. I cannot tell you more."

"You mean you will not," resentfully retorted the lady.

"Then, if you prefer to put it so, I *will* not! Be content, Zora, where ignorance is bliss."

CHAPTER VI.

RODERICK.

On the morning after the woful end of Eldiva Lisburne's wedding day, a woman sat alone in an upper front room of a market gardener's cottage, situated on a country road running west from Georgetown, and facing the high stone walls of the college grounds.

She sat sewing at the front window looking out upon the old wall, while beside her on the floor stood a high basket, piled up with gentlemen's under clothing, upon which she seemed to be at work.

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She appeared to be about thirty-five years of age, and yet grandly beautiful, with a tall, full and finely developed form, a noble head and perfect face; her classic profile showing the straight line of the forehead and nose, the short, curved upper lip, the small, full under lip, the slightly projecting chin and the softly rounded curves of the throat.

Her rich, bluish black hair was parted high up on the left side and fell in little rippling black ringlets over the ivory whiteness of her forehead. Her eyes were large, soft, dark blue, shaded by long black lashes and arched by tapering, jet-black brows. The only color in this faultless face was in the glow of the ruby lips.

The expression of her countenance was so thoughtful, gracious, and dignified that hers might have seemed the face of the ideal princess, rather than of the humble work-woman.

She was clothed in a black serge gown, with a white net handkerchief crossed over her fine bust, and a similar white net cap covering the rich knot of dark hair at the back of her head.

The room in which she sat and sewed was poor enough, but it was scrupulously clean and neat. It seemed to be her only living room. The walls were whitewashed; the floor covered with a "rag" carpet.

She was known to her neighbors as the Widow Dunn, who had come to the city about fifteen years before with a party of English emigrants, all of whom had subsequently gone West, leaving her in Georgetown. She had taken this upper front room in Brown's, the market-gardener's cottage, and she had procured work from the Georgetown College as a plain seamstress to keep in repair the students' underclothing. The work was humble, but the pay was sure.

She had brought with her one son, a boy five years

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old, very bright and intelligent for his age. She had entered him in the parish school, where his quick intelligence, patient application and rapid progress so won the approbation of his pastors and masters that through their influence he was promoted thence as a free pupil to the preparatory school of Georgetown College, whence he rapidly rose from class to class, until at the last exhibition he had graduated with honors.

His success had been a source of great satisfaction to the proud mother, who looked upon her handsome, fair-haired Roderick as another "Admirable Crichton."

He was indeed at this time a fine specimen of young manhood, with a tall, well developed and properly proportioned figure, with a regular, aquiline profile, a fair complexion, prominent, light blue eyes, and pale yellow hair and mustache. The peculiarity of his face was the snow-white centre of his forehead, which was so much fairer than the other parts of his very fair face.

But, ah! his mother's pride and joy were soon turned into fear and anxiety.

Her son was by birth and inheritance a gentleman; he had received the education of a gentleman; for the last eight years he had lived among gentlemen, always preferring even to spend his holidays in private study at the college with the few foreign students, whose long distance from their homes compelled them to remain, and never visiting his mother's humble lodgings for more than a few hours at a time.

And yet he loved his mother devotedly. In fact he loved her, *only*, of all the world—up to the night of the college exhibition. But of that presently. Yes, up to that time all the affection of his heart had concentrated on his beautiful mother, for he had always thought her the most beautiful of all created beings. But he detested her sordid surroundings, although since the day of his

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graduation, he had come home to share her humble abode. In his childhood he had slept in the same room with his mother ; but now, on his return, another room was engaged for him ; a tiny room, at the head of the stairs, over the front door and joining her own. It was just large enough to hold a cot, a wash-stand and a chair, and over these two last articles of furniture, a row of wooden pegs to hang clothes.

Since he had been living at home, his dissatisfaction with life, his vague but bitter resentment against fate constantly betrayed themselves, and made his mother very unhappy. He wanted to study one of the learned professions—the law as a matter of preference :—for the law, he said, was the only calling by which a "gentleman" might rise to political eminence in a republican country ; and to such an eminence he aspired. But how should he study law under present circumstances? Neither himself nor his mother had a cent laid up. His mother could earn two or three dollars a week, but it took all of that, he knew, now that he was living at home, to buy the plainest food and the scantiest fuel and to pay the rent.

Roderick resolved to seek some employment "suitable to a young gentleman" by which he might make money enough to pay for his legal studies. He could not advertise, for neither he nor his mother had a dollar to spare in such a speculation ; but every day he visited the public reading-rooms in Washington to look over all the papers for advertisements that held out any hope of employment for him. And he answered every one that he found, and always gave the learned and venerable fathers of Georgetown College as his references ; but though he had applied in turn for situations as book-keeper, salesman, teacher in a public school, tutor in a private family, usher in an academy, he had not succeeded in getting any employment "suitable to a gentleman,"

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and so, up to the present day, he had remained in the humiliating idleness very unsuitable to an able-bodied young man.

And so he fell into the deepest depression of spirits and the darkest despondency of mind—a mood in which some men commit suicide, leaving other men to wonder why on earth they did it.

Ruth Dunn saw this dangerous and ever-deepening despair on the part of her son, and tried many times to induce him to talk freely to her, so that she might try to comfort him.

"For if I do not know where your wound is, how shall I ever be able to heal it?" she said to him, at last.

Then he told all, and found relief in unburdening his oppressed heart and laying all his heavy troubles before her who loved him more than the life which she had consecrated to him.

He told her the grief and shame he felt in seeing her, his dear mother, so humbly placed and so menially employed.

She took his hand then and bade him remember that poverty was no reproach, and that work was holy. And she told him that for herself she was quite content, that he must not mind her, but pass on to his own personal matters.

Then he told her of all his ambition to rise in this world—to rise to eminence. He felt conscious of abilities to attain the highest position in the profession he longed to follow. Bnt, he complained, he was fettered at the very outset by contracting want. He had no money to pay for a course of lectures at the Law School, or even to buy a text-book on the subject, and he had no means of making money. He said that he had answered advertisements and applied for situations of all sorts not abso-

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lutely menial, but without any success; and that now he utterly despaired of ever doing anything in this world.

Then again his mother took his hand and smiled on him, saying that "despair" at his age, with his good health, good education, and fine talents, was simply absurd; that it was less than a year since he had graduated; that if he had not yet found employment he must still continue to seek it, and that as sure as fate he would find it before long, and then he could save money and begin his law course.

"But I am thinking, dear Roderick," she continued, "that there is something deeper than this delay in finding employment—something very much deeper than that which distresses you."

"Why—what makes you think so, mother dear?" he inquired, with a flushed face and faltering voice.

She looked at him with a world of love in her smiling dark eyes, and inquired archly:

"*Who is she?*"

"Oh, mother! mother dear! How—what do you mean? When—who told you? Why, I never breathed her name to mortal man or woman! How could you have known?" demanded the young man, as much covered with blushing confusion as a young girl might have been. "How *do* you know this, mother?"

"By mother wit, by mother love; besides," added the lady, with a touch of pathos in her tone, "I *have* been young myself, Roderick, dear."

Her words seemed a revelation to him, showing her in a new, transfiguring light. He had never thought of his mother as ever having been youthful, never thought of her but as he had known her all his own short life—a plodding, patient widow in a black gown and a white cap.

A flood of unutterable tenderness passed over him as

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he looked at her, still so grandly beautiful; still the most beautiful creature (save one) that he had ever seen in this world; and he wondered—for the first time—what the story, what the tragedy of her young life had been; and why she had never once spoken to him of his father.

All these thoughts and emotions swept rapidly through his mind and he took his mother's hand, and with fullness of affection and reverence raised it to his lips and pressed it to his heart, murmuring:

"Yes, you have been young, and you have loved, and you have lost him you loved. Oh, dearest mother, I feel and know now, for the first time, how much you must have suffered in your youth? Tell me all about it, mother dear, and let me make up to you for all you have had to do and to bear!"

The lady lifted the hand that he had kissed and released, and she passed it caressingly over his fair hair and smiled as she replied:

"That was long ago, Roderick, and *you have* comforted me—"

"Ah! not so much yet! I have been selfish and thoughtless; but I will—indeed I will!" said the young man, penitently.

"You have *always* comforted me, even from the time when you lay a little, helpless unconscious infant on my bosom, yet with all Heaven about you: you were as the very balm of Gilead to the wounded spirit. But let us not talk of me: but of yourself and your fair one. *Who is she?*"

"Oh! sweetest mother, I do not know," replied the youth.

"You do not know! And yet are sighing your soul away for her?" archly inquired the lady.

"No, indeed, I do not know her name, or who she is,

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or whence she came—I only know she is an angel!" exclaimed the young man.

"*That* is understood, of course," said the lady gravely, drawing down the corners of her lips to keep from smiling. "But tell me all about it. Where did you make this angel's acquaintance?"

"I have not made her acquaintance. Don't you see if I *had* I should know her name, or something about her which I do not?"

"Ah! certainly, I forgot. But to amend my question: Where did you first see her?"

"At the college, on the last night of the exhibition, where the Thespian Corps presented Shakespeare's tragedy or Richard III. and I took the title role. Why, *you* were there, mother! You *must* have noticed her!" exclaimed the young lover, in a reproachful and half-defiant tone, as who should say:

"Now *don't* say that you were in the same hall with that transcendant creature, without being conscious of her divine presence?"

The mother *felt* the unspoken rebuke and smiled archly, even while answering deprecatingly:

"I—do not—quite remember. Did she sit near me?"

"Near you! Oh! dear, no! She was in the third row of seats, directly before the stage."

"And I was at least a dozen seats behind her, with a dense crowd of people between us: so, of course, you know I could not have seen this young lady. And yet a being of such transcendant beauty must have been noticed by those facing her from the stage," said the widow slyly.

"Yes indeed, it would seem so!" naively exclaimed the young man; "but they did not seem to have seen her—the egotistical dolts! they were thinking too much about themselves."

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The lady laughed, and inquired:

"Would you have been any better satisfied if they had all observed her and fallen desperately in love with her?"

"Well, no, I wouldn't!" the young man admitted, with a slight smile; then more gravely he added:

"There, mother dear, I have told you my secret, *all* my secrets, and I feel some relief in confiding them to you. But now do you wonder that I yield to despair?"

"To depression my dear boy, but not to despair! If you persevere you will certainly succeed."

"You have inspired me with fresh hope and courage, dear mother, and I *will* persevere. I am going down to the hotel now to look over the advertisements in the papers at the reading room. I will return to dinner," said the young man cheerfully, as he arose, took his hat and left the house.

This conversation had taken place the last day of April—the day preceding the disastrous wedding of John Daw and Eldiva Lisburne.

Roderick Dunn had scarcely been gone half an hour when he returned with his countenance beaming with hope.

He threw his hat on the table, dropped himself into a chair, and said, in answer to the widow's inquiring look:

"Yes, mother, I have two more chances this morning, and I have taken time by the forelock."

"What are they, Roderick?"

"Two new advertisements of situations in this morning's *National Intelligencer*. The first is for an amanuensis, private secretary and reader to an elderly gentleman, offering board, lodging, washing, the use of a saddle horse, and five hundred dollars a year salary, but *requiring* in the applicant a collegiate education, an irreproachable character, the manners and appearance of a gentle-

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man, and the highest testimonials. Applications were to be directed to R. D., office of the *National Intelligencer*. Well, mother, I have written my application for the place and dropped the letter in the box."

"I really think you will get that place, my dear," said the lady.

"I hope I may; but why do you think so?" eagerly demanded the young man.

"Because of the unusually exacting requirements, my dear. Young gentlemen who could meet all those would not be likely to want such a situation. Your case is an exceptional one."

"Yes, there is something in that. But even if I should not succeed in getting this place, there is another chance that I must look after at once."

"And that, my dear?"

"It is not so good as the first-mentioned, but better than nothing. It is an advertisement for a bookkeeper at Locust Mills, on the Washington and Baltimore Turnpike, almost five miles beyond the Wolf's Head Tavern. The applications are to be made on the premises in person."

"The distance is long," sighed the widow, with the knowledge that the stage fare thither would cost more money than could be scraped together in a week.

"Yes, the distance is long, but the weather is fine and the road is good, so I shall set off to walk it early to-morrow morning."

"To walk it!"

"Yes, mother, dear. I would start *now*, only I should not be able to reach the Mills before eight or nine o'clock, when of course they would be closed for the night and every one gone away, Don't worry, mother dear; I must go. It will not do to let any chance slip."

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"But—suppose you should get the situation of private secretary to the old gentleman?"

"Then I should politely withdraw my application for the bookkeeper's place," said the young man.

He had some little matters to attend to that afternoon —particularly to pawn his gold medal and a few silver ones to raise a little money for his journey, for to set out on such a tramp without a dollar in his pocket would scarcely have been prudent.

He went out and did his business without any difficulty, and after a very short absence returned and spent the rest of the day with his mother.

At sunrise the next morning, having eaten a very early breakfast, he set out on his long walk—a walk that he was destined to have the bitterest cause to remember to the latest hour of his life.

The widow passed the day as she passed at least three hundred days in the year—in darning scores of socks and sewing on dozens of buttons.

At night she went to bed, praying, as usual, for her son, but not the least anxious on account of his absence. She was not morbid.

CHAPTER VII.

A MYSTERY AND A REVELATION.

And on this second day of May we find her seated in her neat room, and engaged in her usual work. She was expecting Roderick every moment. It was now past noon, and she thought he ought to have been home before this. However, she remembered that the walk was long and wearisome, and she was willing to wait.

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At all events, before she had time to grow seriously anxious she heard the front door open and hasty footsteps ascend the stairs.

The next moment Roderick Dunn entered the room and threw himself into the nearest chair, casting his hat, with some violence, upon the floor.

The widow stared for an instant. Was this her handsome, fair-haired blooming son—this pallid, ghastly, wild-looking man?

"Roderick!" she exclaimed, dropping her work and rising. "Roderick, what ails you?"

"I—am tired with my long walk, for one thing," he said, running his fingers through his light hair, and then drawing a handkerchief from his pocket and wiping his face.

"Yes, it was too much for you; lie down on the bed," said his mother, going and removing some piles of mended and folded shirts that lay upon the quilt.

He arose and staggered towards the bed and threw himself upon it.

"Now, lie there quietly, and, after answering one question, don't even speak. Did you get the bookkeeper's place?"

"No, mother; a man from Baltimore was ahead of me and got it."

"Because he came down by stage and you had to walk all the way up, I suppose."

"I suppose so," said the young man, wearily turning his face to the wall.

"Poor boy! Well, never mind! it is all for the best, I think. You will get the other place. I wonder if there is not a letter in the post-office for you even to-day? You did not call to see on your way out?"

"No," with a sigh.

"There, I am cruel. I will not make you talk any

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more. Lie still and rest. I will have a cup of coffee for you in a trice, and when you have drank it you will feel better," said the mother; and she went out and took away the blue screen from the fireplace, got some waste paper and light wood from the lower closet in the corner cupboard, kindled a bright fire, and hung a small kettle of water over the blaze.

Moving softly through the room she set out the table, covered it with a clean, much-darned cloth, and placed upon it her best blue china, and bread, butter and cold mutton.

Then she ran down stairs to the market-gardener's premises and brought up a mug of sweet cream, a bunch of radishes, and a head of lettuce.

When she had made the coffee, and all was ready, she went to the side of the bed to see if her idol were sleeping.

No; he was broad awake, staring at the back wall.

"Roderick, dear, shall I bring you a cup of coffee here, or will you sit up at the table?"

"I will get up mother. I am not—so much hurt, and am not a baby. I shall be all right again presently," said the young man, rising, as with an air of impatience at his own weakness, and sitting down at the table.

He eagerly drank the coffee that she poured out for him, and made a feint of eating the more substantial food; but instead of really doing so he drank a second and a third cup of coffee, and then drew away from the table and seated himself near the window.

His mother glanced at him from time to time, but said nothing until she had cleared the table, washed the dishes, and restored the room to order.

Then she resumed her low sewing-chair at the window near which her son was sitting silent and moody.

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Presently, without looking up from her work, she said gently:

"Roderick, dear, tell me all about it. It will relieve you."

The young man started, and in a low and hurried tone inquired:

"All about what, mother? I don't understand."

"About your new trouble, dear."

"What—what new trouble? Have you heard—heard anything?" he inquired, in a tone of trepidation.

"'Heard?' No, dear; what should I have heard? Was there anything particular to hear?" she anxiously i quired.

He did not answer.

"Why should you have supposed that I had heard anything, Roderick?" she asked, raising her eyes to his.

Looking away from her, and out of the window upon the college wall, he answered, confusedly:

"I thought so from your question, mother, when you asked me to tell you all about it."

"Oh, Roderick, dear, I had heard nothing, even if there was anything particular to hear. I can *see* that it is not only bodily fatigue that has overcome you. You have had a surprise, a shock, of some sort. I know you have."

"Mother, you are a witch!"

"Now, will you tell me all about it, Roderick?"

The young man made a gesture of impatience—not so much at his mother as at himself.

"Why are you so vexed at yourself, dear?" inquired the widow.

The young man laughed in a harsh, self-scorning manner as he answered:

"Because I have been a fool! Such a Heaven forsaken, accursed idiot!"

"RODERICK!"

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"Yes, I have! That's all!" exclaimed the young man, rising, and beginning to walk the floor in an access of excitement.

"Roderick, love, don't you think you would feel better if you were to open your heart to me, as you did once before? To whom should you tell your troubles if not to your own mother? Especially as you and I have only each other in the wide world," said Ruth Dunn, tenderly.

"Only each other," repeated Roderick.

"I did you good the last time you confided in me; and I might do you good now. Tell me, Roderick: Have you seen *her* since you left home?"

The young man came and dropped into his seat again before he answered, under his breath:

"Yes: I have seen her."

"Ah! then, that accounts for all! Where did you meet with her, Roderick?"

"At the Wolf's Head Tavern, where I stopped last night," said the young man; and the ice being now broken, he told the story, and seemed to find relief in doing so.

"When I set out to walk from Washington to Locust Mills I felt fresh and strong enough to go the whole journey without resting, but by noon, when I reached the Wolf's Head, I was so tired that I stepped in under the veranda to rest and call for a glass of beer. I found the whole house in a hubbub of excitement in preparing to receive a fashionable wedding party who were to arrive late that night *en route* for Baltimore and the Northern cities. The bride and groom were Mr. and Mrs. John Daw, of Washington."

"*Who?*" breathed the widow, in a low and almost inaudible voice, and with a paling cheek, as she bent over her work. "*Who* did you say?"

"Mr. and Mrs. JOHN DAW," replied the young man,

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giving the name very distinctly. "I don't know who *she* was, but *he* is the son of the millionaire landholder of Washington, Lord John Daw. Of course, you have heard of *him*. Everybody has."

"Yes, I have heard of him," breathed the lady, very softly.

"Well, when I heard that there was to be such a 'to do' at the Wolf's Head that night, I made up my mind *not* to stop there on my way home, but to get on to Rossburg, if possible. But 'man proposes,' and—you know the usual result. I rested an hour at the Wolf's Head, and then walked on to Locust, where I arrived at 3 P. M., very much fatigued."

"I don't wonder," said the sympathizing listener.

"I had to wait until nearly five o'clock before I could see the proprietor, and then I was told that I was hours too late, the place having been given to a man from Baltimore who had just left the office."

"As I said before, my dear, I am not sorry that you were disappointed in that situation. I feel sure that you will get the better one for reasons that I have already given you."

"Perhaps I may, mother."

"Go on, my dear."

The young man drew a deep breath like a sigh, and continued:

"It was near six o' clock when I set out on my return journey. I walked slowly, so that it was nine o' clock when I again reached the Wolf's Head Tavern. I did not intend to stop all night at the Wolf's Head on account of that wedding party which was expected, but as they were not to arrive before twelve, midnight, and there was a stage-coach to pass the tavern on its way to Washington at half-past ten, I thought I would lie down and

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sleep for an hour, and then return to the city by the coach, as the cost of that ride would be little.

"Well, mother mine, I engaged a vacant room for my nap by paying a trifle, and went and laid down and fell into a sleep that was more like a swoon than a natural slumber. I slept so long and soundly that I did not wake up until I was aroused by the bustle of some unusual occurrence.

I summoned a waiter, and then discovered that I had overslept myself by nearly two hours. It was now past midnight. The Washington coach had gone by an hour and a half before, and the wedding party had just arrived.

"Then, mother, there was nothing else for me to do but to resign myself to the inevitable and spend the night at the inn."

Here the young man paused so long and so moodily that the widow jogged his memory by saying:

"It was there you saw the young lady?"

"Yes, it was there I saw the young lady," answered the young man, and he said no more, but fell into a moody silence again.

"And—was she the bride, my poor boy?" inquired the widow, shrewdly guessing that now she had got to the root of the young lover's new trouble.

"Oh, no mother! Thank Heaven she was not the bride, but one of the bridesmaids. You see I got up and went down stairs to see if I could get anything to eat, and while I stood in the passage three young ladies came out of the parlor and went up stairs. The sight of the last one that passed nearly took away my breath, for *it was she!* the angel of my dream! And while I stood gazing after her, a waiter who was crossing the hall with a tray of dishes in his hand, pointed out the bride to me —the first of the three that were ascending the stairs— a tall, fair, imperial beauty, but not a woman for me to

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love !—not my dark-eyed angel !" murmured the young man, as he fell again into silence.

"Did you see her afterwards ?" inquired the widow, with a view of rousing him.

"Yes—once more," said Roderick, and he said no more until his mother had put another question.

"Did you discover her name ?"

"Yes—by the merest chance. As I went up the stairs behind her—she being near the top, I being near the bottom—I saw something white slip from her pocket or her hand. It fluttered down to my feet, and—I felt as if it was a white dove from her pure bosom ! I picked it up and found that it was a delicate lace handkerchief, with the subtile perfume of violets in it. I took it up stairs, just in time to see her half way down the passage."

"And you restored it to her, and so got to speak to her—and in doing so you said something indiscreet which called forth a rebuke that has wounded your feelings and caused you to be so vexed with yourself, and to call *my son* an idiot in pretty strong language. But don't be too hard on Roderick, for I dare say the young lady is not," said the widow, archly.

"No, mother, you are altogether wrong. For when I saw her half way down the passage she was entering a bed-chamber, in attendance upon the bride, the fair Juno I told you about. So I took my prize into my own room and examined it by the light of my lamp. There I found her name—*Eldiva*—minutely worked in hair—dark hair like her own," added the lover, musingly, and then again he dropped into silence.

"But you restored the handkerchief finally ?" inquired the honest widow.

"No—I brought it away with me ! Here it is ! But I *will* restore it, sometime or other," said the young man,

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as he drew the fragile fabric of lace and cambric from his bosom, and laid it before his mother.

Ruth Dunn gravely shook her head at her son, saying:

"Love laughs at *laws* as well as at locksmiths, it seems, Roderick!"

He smiled for the first time since his re-entrance into the house, saying:

"I mean to return it! Indeed I do mother! I only wish to keep it a little while, because it seems a part of herself."

"Do you know *where* to return it?"

"No, but I will try to find out.

"You could advertise the handkerchief! It is worth it."

"Yes, I could do that; but I do not wish to."

"And talking about advertisements, had you not better go to the post-office—if you are sufficiently rested—and see if there is a letter in answer to your application for the private secretary's place?" suggested the practical mother.

"Yes, I will go at once," replied her son, and he picked up his hat and left the house.

Ruth Dunn worked on for half an hour longer, at the end of which time Roderick returned with a rather more cheerful countenance.

"Good news, Roderick?" exclaimed the lady.

"Yes, mother! You were a true prophetess, and I have as good as got the place!" answered the young man, drawing from his pocket a large letter, directed in a large hand and sealed with a large red seal.

"That is from the gentleman who advertised for an amanuensis, then?"

"Yes; that is, it is from his agent, which amounts to the same thing: and who do you think the gentleman is?"

"How in the world should I be able to guess, my dear?

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Is he a cabinet minister, a senator, or anything of that sort?"

"No!"

"Then you must tell me, for I could never guess right."

"Well, then, he is—Lord John Daw!"

"*Great Heaven!*"

These words escaped the widow, in a low-breathed ejaculation, as she bent down over her work, with a face turned ashen gray in hue.

"Yes," continued the young man, who, in his preoccupation, had not observed the effect of his communication—"Lord John Daw, the millionaire landholder and the most influential private gentleman in Washington. You said this morning, when I mentioned his son's marriage, that you had heard of him, I think?"

"Yes—" breathed the lady, in an expiring voice, as she slightly shifted the position of her low sewing chair, so as to turn her back to the window and bring her agitated face into the shade.

"Well," continued the young man, "he writes to me—or, what amounts to the same thing, Mr. Richard Daly, his agent, writes to me, that—But I had better read his letter, had I not?"

"Yes," sighed the lady, in a tone as soft as the lowest note of the Eolian harp.

Roderick Dunn, still absorbed in the subject of his situation, unfolded the letter and read:

"THE HILL, Washington, May 1st, 18—.

"SIR—I am in receipt of your letter of this morning, applying for the situation of amanuensis advertised in this day's *Intelligencer*.

"Lord John Daw, my honored principal, instructs me to say that your letter of application, in its composition, chirography, and references, has impressed him most favorably in behalf of the writer.

"His lordship further directs me to request you to

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wait on him, at his residence, called The Hill, at 11 o'clock A. M. on Friday, for a personal interview.

Respectfully, RICHARD DALY."

"That will be to-morrow morning, said the young man, folding up the agent's letter and replacing it in his pocket.

"Yes," murmured the lady, in an almost inaudible voice.

He lifted his eyes to look at her, and those eyes dilated to a gaze. It was now *his* turn to discover signs of extreme mental disturbance in *her*.

"Mother!" he suddenly exclaimed. "What is the matter with you, dear? To all that I have communicated you have only answered by sighing 'Yes' and 'Yes' in the faintest voice! Dear mother, is it possible that you don't like the idea of my taking the situation under Lord John Daw? It is the first offer I have had, and it is an excellent position. If I should happen to please my patron it may lead to something much higher—for he is a man of great influence. Still, if for any personal reason whatever—though I cannot imagine what it can be—you object to my taking this position, I will decline it. You have only to speak, dear mother!"

"Give me time," pleaded the lady, still in a very low voice, while her son gazed on her in surprise and perplexity. "Give me a little time. I did not *dream* that *he* was the advertiser—that it was to *him* you were to go."

"Is there any objection, dear mother?"

"Yes—No—I don't know! Oh, Roderick, my dear, I cannot say whether I should rejoice or lament at this fatality!" murmured the widow, wringing her hands.

"Fatality! Mother!"

"Yes, fatality! for this offer from—" she paused, caught her breath, and continued in a still lower tone—

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"this offer from—Lord John Daw is a fatality, for good or for evil!"

"Mother! I don't understand you!"

"No! how should you? But this offer has precipitated a revelation that must some time have been made to you," said Ruth Dunn, and then she paused so long, as her son sat gazing on her, that at last he repeated, interrogatively:

"A revelation, dear mother?"

"Yes. Every one takes it for granted that I am a widow, though I have never called myself one," she said, as a flush passed over her pale face and mounted even to the edges of her dark hair.

"And—are you not a widow, dear mother?" inquired Roderick, in much surprise.

"No," sighed the lady.

"My father is living, then!"

"Yes!"

"Good Heaven! Where is he? Who is he?"

"Lord John Daw!"

CHAPTER VIII.

"LOVE, STILL LOVE."

"Lord John Daw is your father!"

Had Roderick Dunn heard aright? *Had* his mother really spoken these very words?

He doubted his own ears until he saw her head droop, her face bury itself in her open hands, and her ears burn with the blush that overspread her whole countenance.

Then he turned pale. He could hardly utter the words that fell heavily, one by one, from his lips;

"Lord—John—Daw—my—father?"

She nodded with a tearless sob,

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"How is it, then, that while he luxuriates in wealth we suffer in want? How is it that neither you nor I bear his name?"

For all answer, from the woman's over-charged bosom broke forth a storm of tears and sobs.

Roderick knelt by her side and put his arm around her waist and drew her head upon his bosom, where she gasped and panted forth the last throes of her paroxysm of passionate sorrow in these whispered words:

"I am going to tell you why! I am going to tell you everything!—and, first of all, that it is not my fault. Oh, indeed, indeed, my boy, it is not my fault!"

"I know that, mother. I know that perfectly well. Why—why should you think it necessary to tell me so?" demanded Roderick, stooping and pressing his lips to her forehead.

"And yet it was a strange piece of news I told you, dearest," she sighed.

"Yes, it was strange—very strange, and there has been frightful wrong-doing somewhere; but not with you, dear mother, not with you!"

"Bless you for your faith in me, my son!" fervently replied the mother.

"Faith? It is *sight!* It is knowledge! I have known you all my life, dear mother!" he exclaimed, with a slight laugh; "and I know that you could never have been either wicked or—*weak*," he added, in a graver voice.

"That is the truth, dear boy. And oh, what a comfort that you should know it to be the truth even before I have proved it!"

"But, dearest mother, you have proved it! Your whole life has proved it. I told you that my estimate of my mother's worth was the result of knowledge."

"Dear Roderick, you have faith in *me*, and now, before

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I begin my story, I must invoke your—charity—for—*some one else*," she said, in a hesitating manner.

"For Lord John Daw, to wit!" said the youth.

"For your father, my dear!" pleadingly suggested the mother.

"Hum—we'll see, after I have heard your story, whether I'll honor 'my lord' with the higher title!" said Roderick.

"It is sometimes hard to judge righteous judgment. It was hard for me to do so when the test came," sighed Ruth Dunn.

And then she began the story of her sad young life:

"I do not remember my poor father. He was a village doctor, and died of typhus fever contracted during an epidemic, in which he devoted himself day and night with such untiring zeal to the sick as to break down his strength and render him an easy victim to the disease which carried him off.

"I, his first and only child, was then but three years old. My mother, left almost destitute by his death, sold the surgery and fixtures, and, with the proceeds, took a larger house and furnished it for lodgers.

"Our village was much frequented by gentlemen during the fishing season, and among my first impressions of life was the annual inroad of lodgers that came at that season.

"Here, in my widowed mother's lodging-house, I grew up to the dangerous, 'bad eminence' of being called 'the village beauty.' If I tell you this, and also tell you that before I had completed my sixteenth year I had had several eligible offers of marriage, it is not from vanity, but for truth's sake.

"However, neither the attorney's son, the doctor's assistant, nor the curate, were to my taste, no, nor to my

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mother's; for these little gentlemen of the little country town were as impecunious as they were unattractive.

"And as for the lodgers who did me the honor of demanding my hand, they were generally city clerks or shopmen with small salaries, enjoying short holidays. Neither my mother nor I would look at any of them in a matrimonial light.

"But, at length, just as I had entered my seventeenth year, there came to the village a gentleman, who introduced himself as Mr. John Dawson. He came very early in the season, before we had any other lodgers, and he engaged the whole of my mother's house—(except, of course, our own private apartments)—saying that he disliked the company of strangers and was willing to pay for his privacy—which he did by advancing the rent for two months. He was attended by a valet and groom, who were also to be accommodated in the house.

"I was not at home at the time of these negotiations. I was spending the day in the village church, helping to train the Sunday-school children in singing and recitations for a coming festival. So I heard nothing of the new lodger until I returned in the evening.

"Then my mother had a great deal to tell me about him, his distinguished appearance, his wealth, his liberality.

"'A true gentleman, without doubt, my dear,' she said; 'a true gentleman in every sense of the word! Why, his very servants, his valet and his groom, are more refined in manners than the young men we have hitherto had down here.

"All this piqued my curiosity to see the new lodger. But this curiosity was not immediately gratified. Mr. Dawson kept himself very quiet, was waited on by his own servants, and went in and out unperceived. Only Ann, our maid-of-all-work, who had better opportunities

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of seeing him, gave me those particulars which my mother did not consider of sufficient importance to communicate.

"'Mr. Dawson is very handsome, Miss,' she told me that night, while I was with her in the kitchen helping to get the new lodger's tea. 'Very handsome and grand-looking; not so very tall, but quite elegant, with a beautiful, fair complexion, and light hair and blue eyes. I'm sure you will admire him when you see him, Miss, and I expect you will see him at church to-morrow, for the Missis has offered him a seat in her pew,' concluded the girl.

"All that was news to me. My mother had not mentioned our lodger's good looks, nor her polite offer of her pew to him. So when I had sent up the gentleman's tea I went into our sitting room, where my mother was at work, and I asked her if she had invited our lodger to a seat in our pew.

"'Yes,' she said, 'I could not in common civility do otherwise, when Mr. Dawson asked me whether we had free seats. He seems a very nervous gentleman, and I was glad to offer him the use of our pew, where, dear knows, there's plenty of room for a visitor.'

"I said no more. I was glad my mother had done this, so that I could have a good opportunity of seeing our new lodger.

"The next morning being Sunday, my mother and myself got ready early to go to church, in advance of our lodger, so that we might be in our pew to receive him when he should come.

"But as we stepped out of the door on the sidewalk we were joined by a gentleman who was already walking there, and who politely lifted his hat to my mother, and remarked that he hoped she would permit him to attend her to the church, as he did not know the way thither.

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"'Certainly, sir,' my mother replied, and then, with a slight indication of my presence, said—'My daughter.'

"Again the gentleman lifted his hat and then he turned to walk with us. He walked by my side, not, as it seemed to me from preference, but from necessity, as he could not have done otherwise without taking the wall of my mother.

"I had no opportunity then of viewing him without looking directly at him; but in the first glance, when we had met for an instant face to face, I had seen, as had been reported to me, that he was very handsome; a blonde of the fairest type, with bright, yellow hair, light blue eyes, and a complexion as fine and clear as that of the fairest girl. Why," suddenly broke off the narrator, turning to her son, "if you wish to know how he appeared go and look at yourself in the glass. He was *then* what you are now in features and complexion; only not so tall and stout. You take your form from my side of the house, dear Roderick!"

"Mother!" replied the young man, "I am sorry that I look like him. I don't admire him. But go on with your story, although it hardly needs the telling. It is one of those stories which tells itself."

"No, but it does not, my boy! There are matters—But you will see," replied the lady. And then she resumed her narrative:

"Our lodger entered into conversation with us as we walked on, and inquired about our church, whether it was well attended, and our minister, whether he was a true minister of religion or merely a professional preacher, and seemed so interested that he won my mother's predisposition in his favor.

"He seldom addressed his conversation to me, not even where it concerned me, as it did when he told my mother

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that he had the pleasure of seeing me once before, when I assisted at a flower table at a fair in the neighboring town. I did not remember the circumstance at all, and told him so, at which I thought he seemed disappointed, even though he explained that he had been in the town but an hour on his way to the North, and while waiting for a stage-coach to continue his journey he had lounged into the fair and had seen me at a table, very much surrounded by customers, and that he had bought a bouquet from another lady at the table, as I had no time to attend to him. This was only ten days ago, he added, and he had not had time to forget a pleasant face, was glad to meet me again, and so forth.

"Our conversation ended at the church door. He accompanied us to our pew, and was very devout during the services. I tell you all this because it was on the occasion of my first meeting and first acquaintance with the man who was destined to have such an influence over my whole after life.

"Mr. Dawson walked home with us after the benediction. And he went to church with us again in the afternoon. When we returned in the evening he lingered a while in the front hall to thank my mother for her 'kindness' to him and to express his pleasure in the sermons he had heard that day.

"The door of our sitting-room, which was on the ground floor front, stood open, and our attractive little tea-table stood ready. So what could my poor mother do but invite our lodger to come in and take a cup of tea with us.

"He gratefully accepted the invitation, and spent the evening with us, making himself so very agreeable and interesting that my mother was more than ever pleased with him, and after he had bidden us good-night she grew quite enthusiastic in his praise.

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"'So different,' she said, 'from all the other young men who had ever come to lodge at our house—profane young snobs that never entered a place of worship, but passed their Sundays in smoking, drinking, and carousing. Such a satisfaction,' she declared, 'to have so moral and religious a gentleman in the house, where there were only two lone women, and to have no one else to be bothered with.'

"Well, after what I have told you, Roderick, you will be prepared to hear that an intimate friendship grew up between ourselves and our lodger. He ceased to be a stranger to us, and therefore he ceased to be a stranger in the village. Our rector, seeing him in our pew every Sunday, at both services, called on him at our house, and afterwards invited him to dinner.

"As for myself—" the lady paused thoughtfully for a little while, and then continued: "I soon learned that he loved me, for there are tones and looks that speak more eloquently than any words, and I knew that he did, even before he told me that he had loved me from the first moment he saw me at the flower table of the fair, and that he had taken infinite pains to find out who I was and where I lived, and, finally, that he had come down to our remote corner of England only to see me in the hope of winning my hand.

"He *did* love me. Of that I am as sure, *now*, after all these years, as I was on the day that he told me so. He loved me with all the strength of his soul; and his great love won mine completely. He said he had come to win my heart, and he won it: and he won *more*, in the esteem and friendship of all our neighbors, including our good rector. His last winning was my poor mother's consent to our marriage.

"This was near the end of the season, when the day drew near for his return to London. In asking for me

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he offered to give references, saying, that as he had come a perfect stranger among us she had a right to demand his credentials before giving him such an irrevocable pledge of confidence as the hand of her daughter.

"My mother had such implicit faith in her lodger that she repudiated the idea of requiring anything of the sort from him; but he assured her that she should have them if only for the satisfaction of her less confiding friends, and in a few days he showed her letters from Richard Daly, Esq., of Lincoln's Inn, London, and from Lord John Daw, Lowater, Leicestershire. Those letters my mother showed to the rector, who said that he knew Lord John Daw by reputation as the younger son of the Duke of Alton, and as a leader in all enterprises affecting the welfare and progress of society, and that a credential from his lordship was highly satisfactory.

"So well satisfied was my dear mother that she made no objection to our speedy marriage when it was urged by Dawson, who gave as a reason for his haste the necessity he was under of returning to London at once.

"Well, we were married in our parish church by our beloved rector, whose daughter was my bridesmaid and whose son was our groomsman. The village doctor gave me away, saying, gravely, that as he was my father's successor in his profession it devolved upon him to perform some of my father's duties. My dear mother gave a wedding breakfast to as many of our friends and neighbors as our house would accommodate, and after the breakfast we took leave of our friends and started for London, Mr. Dawson promising to bring me back every summer to spend the season with my mother, and exacting a promise from her to come to us at the end of a month for a long visit, and embracing and kissing my mother as fondly as if he had been her own son.

"'Oh! am I not blessed in my son-in-law?' said my

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poor mother, with tears of joy in her eyes, as she appealed to our friends and neighbors who were assembled to see us off. The stage-coach had called for us, and could not wait; so we were hurried in, and were soon rolling onward along the London road, as it was called though we were some hundred miles from that great city.

"We travelled only by day, stopping at the principal post towns on our route, so that it was at the end of the third day we reached London. We remained but ten days there, while Mr. Dawson attended to some pressing business, and then went to Paris, where we spent two weeks, after which we travelled over the continent, returning to England in the autumn.

"Mr. Dawson took a furnished villa at Croyden, where we settled down to as happy a country life as ever was enjoyed by mortals. It was a fool's paradise, my dear son, but as I did not know it then, and as the ignorance of bliss was mine I was happy as a fool in paradise. I had a letter from our pastor to the rector of the Croyden church, and I united with the congregation, and was called on by the rector's family and by the principal people of my own rank in life.

"After we were completely settled, my dear mother came and spent a month with us, and I gave tea parties and dinners in her honor, and some of our neighbors did the same in return, and all this made her proud and happy. Seeing how pleased she was, my husband, who was very, very kind indeed, besought her to remain with us for good, and keep the lodging-house at St. Margaret's only for our summer resort. But my mother was very wise, or thought herself so, and she shook her head, and said, as well as she loved us and as sure as she felt of our love, she would not put our mutual affection to so severe a test as to take up her permanent abode with us.

"So at the end of her visit my dear mother went back

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to her country home, to console herself with the anticipation of our promised sojourn with her the next summer, and with stories of our prosperity and happiness told over social cups of tea to sympathizing neighbors.

"It was a few days after my mother's departure that an incident happened, very trivial in itself, yet of immense significance to me, if I could only have understood it aright! I was sitting with my husband in the little book-room that I dignified with the name of library. The morning papers had just been brought in and laid upon the table. My husband had taken up the *Times*, and was busy over its columns. I took up the *Morning Post*, because it was a gossiping sort of paper, full of society news. Glancing down its columns, my eyes fell upon a paragraph that interested me because it contained a name made familiar to my mind as that of one of my husband's references. And I spoke up impulsively:

"'Here is something about one of your friends, John dear,' I said.

"He laid down his paper and looked up; (he was always as polite to me as if I had been some other lady and not his wife); and I read out the paragraph. Oh! I remember it, as I have good cause to remember it, word for word. It was this:

"'A letter from Bagdad states that Lady John Daw is now in that city, in company with Prince Olgus of Schwartzburg. It is said that Lord John Daw has filed a petition for divorce, which will come before the house of Lords at the next session of Parliament. His lordship is now supposed to be travelling in the North of England.'

"'That is your friend,' I said. 'Oh! what a dreadful thing for him to have such a—*shameful* domestic trouble as this! And you never mentioned it to me!'

"No, my sinless dove! Why should I have sullied your

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pure ears with such an impure story? I am very sorry you have chanced to read it. Never speak of it again, dear love, but forget it as soon as possible,' said my husband; and he got up and took the paper from me and left the room.

"The subject was never resumed between us. We had a very happy winter. Owing to the letter from the rector of St. Margaret's to the rector of Croyden we were well received in the neighborhood.

"Early in the ensuing summer we went down to my mother's house at St. Margaret's. There, two months later, *you* came to be my comfort through all the trouble that speedily followed.

"Before I was able to travel it became necessary for my husband to go to London on pressing business. He went, leaving me comfortable and happy in my mother's home. I did not grieve at the parting, which I thought would last but a week at the farthest. And, besides, I was so blest in the possession of my son, and the presence of my mother, and the assured love of my husband. No prevision warned me that our parting was forever.

"We had but two mails a week at St. Margaret's, but letters came to me by every mail; full of affection they were, for he *did* love me more than life—more than that which is better than life.

"The first cloud which floated over the suushine of my happiness came not through him, but through the failing health of my dear mother. She was forty years old only, and should have lived thirty or forty years longer; but one day, when you were about two months old, and had just begun to know us and crow with pleasure at the sight of either of us, and when I was expecting a letter by every mail to announce the speedy arrival of my husband to escort me and the child back to London, my poor mother was struck down with paralysis. All in an

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instant, without a moment's warning, she was changed as by a thunderbolt from the active, stirring, sprightly woman to the perfectly helpless invalid, without even the power to move or speak.

"I was overwhelmed with grief, and my husband, to whom I communicated the sad news, was full of sympathy and consideration. He wrote back, saying that I was to remain with my mother as long as she should need me, and that, as these cases were sometimes apt to be tedious, and I might have to spend the winter with her, and, if she should live to recover, the summer also, as usual, he would give up the furnished house at Croyden, and come down to St. Margaret's.

"Well!—No, it was *not* well! His previsions were verified. My mother lay for weeks and months as a living, conscious soul within a dead body. It was more horrible than anything you can conceive. I cannot dwell upon it.

"In due time my boxes containing all my personal effects arrived at our house, having been sent all the way from Croyden to St. Margaret's by carrier's wagons; and a letter came from my husband saying that he should follow them soon.

"But he never came, and he never wrote again. I watched for the stage-coach, and I watched for the mail; but coach after coach came in without my husband; mail after mail, without a letter.

"At first, though I was vexed and disappointed, I was not anxious—some little unexpected matter of business might have delayed him—a letter might have miscarried—such things would happen. I was patient and reasonable for a few days.

"But when more than a week had passed away without my seeing or hearing from him I grew very anxious and unhappy. All my letters to him had been directed

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to the General Post-Office, London; to be left till called for. I knew no other address; but I wrote by every mail, imploring him to write, or if he were disabled by sickness from doing so, to get some one else to write for him, and to relieve my great anxiety.

"No answer came to these appeals.

"And in the meantime dear mother was sinking slowly but surely. In December the doctor said that the end could not be far off. I used to borrow the London *Times* from the rectory for the one purpose of reading the death notices, for I was haunted with a terrible suspicion that my husband's silence was due to his extreme illness that might end in death, the only notice of which I might get through the columns of the *Times*, as there might be no one near him to write to me; and then in conjunction with this thought, it occurred to me, for the first time, to reflect how strange it was that I did not know any member of my husband's family, that he had never spoken to me of any of his relatives, and that when I wished to know whether he was living or dead I had to watch the newspaper even for the least chance of getting news; so in fear and trembling I looked down the death-column every day, and not finding his name there, felt present relief—until one day it occurred to me that he might have died and his death might have been advertised very soon after the writing of his last letter and before I had had time to grow uneasy.

"Then I became utterly miserable. I still wrote by every mail, and still without receiving any response. My troubles must have been insupportable but for the comfort I found in you, my child."

Here Roderick took his mother's hand and pressed it warmly, saying:

"It is well, dear mother, that you had some comfort in your son then, you have had so little lately; but I

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will henceforth be more to you than I have ever been! I will indeed! Better days shall come to both of us."

"Heaven grant the better days, dear boy; but for the rest—you have *always* been my consolation for every trouble," said the lady, earnestly, and then she resumed her story:

"One day, while looking over the *Times*, after I had read down the death roll, my eyes fell upon another paragraph that immediately arrested my attention because it contained the name of the only friend of my husband whom I had ever heard him mention—the unfortunate Lord John Daw, whose guilty wife had left him and was travelling through the East with a German prince.

"The paragraph was to this effect:

"'We are happy to announce that Lord John Daw is recovering from the long and dangerous illness which has prostrated him for so many weeks at his seat, Lowater in Leicestershire. It is said that the disappointment and mortification incident upon the failure of his lordship's suit for divorce from his lady upon the ground of her infidelity, which was tried in the House of Lords in the beginning of this session, and which was met and defeated by counter charges on her ladyship's part, was the cause of the mental and physical prostration that has brought his lordship so near the brink of the grave. Lord John Daw purposes to come up to London as soon as he shall be able to travel.'

"I do not pretend, my dear Roderick, to give you the precise words in which this paragraph was couched. I give them only as near as I can remember. I had thought, on seeing first the name of Lord John Daw, that I would ask our rector for his lordship's address and write to him to inquire if he knew aught of my husband's whereabouts; but when I thought of the trouble and illness from which he was suffering, I felt that it would be both

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wrong and useless for me to annoy him with a letter from a perfect stranger.

"However, my mother's condition, which had occupied all my time that was not given to my child, now, also absorbed nearly all my thoughts. I said she had been sinking slowly for weeks. She had lost speech, motion, and the power of swallowing solid food. Now, at last, she lost the power of swallowing liquids, and from this time she sank rapidly, and died about the middle of December.

"Although her death had been expected from the first day of her attack, and approached so slowly, yet when it came, it was a crushing blow to me! But for you, my dear boy, I should have died then! All my former life seemed to have fallen away in the loss of my mother!

"Yet, after the funeral, I had to rouse myself. I wrote to my husband of what had happened, and told him that I should have to give up the house and go away to him, and wished to know when I should come; but, as was expected, I got no answer.

"The personal property of my mother had been settled on me. I selected certain mementoes of her that we had possessed in my father's lifetime, and then I sold all the rest of the furniture, gave up the house, and with the money that I had raised, took my child and travelled to London in search of my husband.

"We travelled by stage-coach, and were three days on the journey. My mother had a distant cousin, a widow of the name of Fletcher, who kept a bookstore in the Strand, and with whom she corresponded about once a year. She had been duly invited to my wedding, indeed, but she did not take the long journey to attend, as no one expected that she would.

"It was the afternoon of the third day when we arrived in London, and I went directly to my cousin's store. I

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found her behind the counter, an enormously stout woman with a fresh, healthy complexion and gray hair, and apparently about fifty years of age. We had never met before, so I had to introduce myself; though I need not have done so, as she exclaimed:

"'Yes, you are Rachel's own daughter! I should have known you anywhere by your likeness to your mother! And that is your baby? And where is your husband?'

"Fortunately for me, before I was called upon to explain she had noticed my black dress, and she broke out into ejaculations of surprise and dismay, with—

"'Great patience! You are in the deepest mourning! I hope—I hope—I hope you have not lost him!'

"Then I broke down and cried bitterly, and between tears and sobs told her of my poor mother's illness and death. She took the baby from my arms and led me into her back parlor and made me sit down in the arm-chair by the fire, while she called a girl from below stairs to come up and mind the shop. She made me a cup of tea, and while I was drinking it she tried to comfort me in every way her kind heart could suggest.

"But when I told her all my troubles, and how strangely I had lost trace of my husband, she became too much alarmed to be able to reassure me. She talked of the strange disappearances of people in London—some of whom had fallen into the hands of the press-gang and had been carried off to sea before they could advise their friends of their seizure, and some of whom had evidently fallen among thieves and been mysteriously made way with by being sunk into the waters of the river, or buried in the depths of some cellar.

"By the time she had nearly driven me into hysterics she desisted in her dark hints and began to express a hope that none of these misfortunes had happened to Mr. Dawson, who was evidently no stranger to London

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and its ways, and knew what was what, too well to come to sorrow in that sort of way.

"She was very good to me. She said that of course I must stop with her while pursuing my search, and asked me where she should send for my trunks. I told her, and she called a porter from the street and dispatched him on the errand.

"My old cousin lived alone with one servant.

"Her son and daughter were both married and living in another part of the city. They had got the emigration fever, she said, and talked about going to America, and if they concluded to go, she should accompany them.

"All this talk went on while I was taking my tea, and after I had finished it she showed me up stairs to a neat room over the shop, and advised me to go to bed.

"I followed her counsel, for both myself and my child were worn out with our three days' travel by coach.

"We both slept, with the roar of the noisiest street in London below us—the roar that ceased not day nor night, and that certainly would have kept us awake had we been less prostrated.

"In the morning, immediately after breakfast, I asked my cousin if she could tell me where Lord John Daw lived—for, as he was the son of a duke, I supposed his residence would be known to everybody.

"'Lord John Daw!' cried my cousin, with a look of horror. 'What ever do *you*, an honest woman, want of him, I'd like to know?'

"'He was my husband's friend, and I wish to inquire of him if he knows anything about Mr. Dawson's whereabouts,' I answered.

"'Don't you go a nigh him, child! He's one of the notoriousest villyans in all London!'

"'I knew that he had been very unfortunate in his

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domestic relations, but I never thought that he was wicked,' I deprecatingly answered.

"'Wicked people is mostly unfortunate! You may take your davy for that! Don't you go a nigh that grand villyan if you don't want to lose your character!'

"'Why, what has Lord John done?' I asked.

"'What *haint* he done?' she sharply demanded; 'he done everything but murder! and I don't doubt he'd have done that if he hadn't been afeared of his neck being stretched! What has he done, indeed?' cried the old lady, working herself up to a fit of indignation; 'he's druv his lady to run away from him, and then he sneaked away from London, and after a while turned up, living under a false name with a young woman as he passed off for his wife! And he never would have been found out, neither, if my lady's attorneys hadn't kept spies on his track. So when his divorce trial came on at the House of Lords it was squelched!'

"'I am sure my husband knew nothing of this wickedness, or he never would have called Lord John Daw his friend.'

"'Well, maybe not. But all the town knows it now. Don't you go nigh him, child.'

"'No, of course I will not,' I sighed.

"But I resolved to go to Croyden and inquire of the rector there, if he, or any one in the neighborhood, could tell me anything about my missing husband. So I left the child in the care of my cousin and started for Croyden. It was several hours' journey by stage-coach, and it was midday before I alighted and started to walk to the rectory. It was snowing hard.

"I reached the rectory, covered with snow, and rang the bell.

"A smart servant girl opened the door. I had known

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her well in the months that I had lived in Croyden, and so I said :

"'How do you do, Ann?' in a friendly tone.

"But the girl stared at me in an insolent manner, and, instead of inviting me in, held the door in her hand ; and when I asked to see the rector she answered curtly that her master was not in.

"Then I gave her my card, and requested her to take it to her mistress.

"She carried it into the parlor, which was just on the right of the hall in which I was standing, and as she left the door open, I heard every word of the colloquy that ensued.

"Said the girl : 'It is Mrs. Dawson, ma'am, asking to see you.'

"Said the lady : 'Tell that person, Ann, that I cannot receive Mrs. Dawson.'

"And the girl came out with the message, returning my card.

"I left the rectory door amazed and dismayed. It was snowing faster and faster.

"Yet through the snow I walked to the houses of several of my former friends, *always* to be rebuffed as I had been at the rectory.

Full of consternation and wonder, I went to the stage office and remained there until the coach started for London.

"It was dark when I reached my cousin's house in the Strand. I did not tell her of the cruel rebuffs with which I had been met. I merely told her that I had not succeeded in gaining news of my husband.

"She sympathized with me, and I took my child and went up stairs and went to bed. How peaceful is the presence of a sleeping child! With mine nestling on my bosom I almost forgot my woes.

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"Early the next morning I started out on a second quest—this time to Lincoln's Inn Fields, in search of Mr. Richard Daly, who had been my husband's second reference.

"The distance was not long. I soon reached the place, and after some inquiry found the house and was shown up two pairs of stairs to Mr. Richard Daly's office.

"I was shown into an ante-room, or outer office, where two young men were sitting, each on a high stool at a high desk, busily writing.

"I inquired of the nearest one to the door, if I could see Mr. Richard Daly.

"He replied: 'Not just yet, as he has a client in with him. Take a seat, ma'am, if you please.'

"I sat down and waited. In a few minutes a gentleman came in, who, from the style of his talk to the clerks, seemed to belong to the office. His first question was:

"'Have you done engrossing that deed for Lord John Daw?'

"'I have almost finished it, sir.'

"'Hurry up with it, then! I shall have to take it down to my Lord at Lowater this morning.'

"'If you please, sir, his lordship is here.'

"'Here? In town?'

"'Lord John Daw is here, in the office, sir.'

"'Here! In this office! Lord John Daw!'

"'Yes, sir, closeted with Mr. Daly at this present speaking.'

"'Strange! It must be something very sudden and important that brings his lordship to our office! He has never honored us with a visit before! How long has he been here?'

"'Full half an hour, sir, I should say.'

"'Something very sudden, or he would have sent for

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some of us to wait on his lordship at home. Ah! here he comes, I fancy.'

"The door of the inner office opened and two gentlemen came out together.

"One of them, who seemed to be obsequiously attending upon the other, was saying:

"'The documents shall be sent to your lordship within two hours.'

"They were crossing the room and came into my full view, as the other answered:

"'Be punctual for once, Daly! I start for St. Margaret's this evening.'

"THE LAST SPEAKER WAS MY HUSBAND!!

"There could be no doubt—no *possible* doubt of that! And as he spoke he passed out of the room, still obsequiously attended by Mr. Daly.

"For a minute I was so paralyzed by the discovery that I could not move, or even think. I sat there, feeling petrified. Then I sprang up so suddenly that I overturned my chair and startled both the clerks, as I ran out of the room and down the stairs to overtake and speak to him.

"He had not recognized me, I was sure, because he had not once looked towards me. I reached the foot of the lowest flight of stairs and the street door just in time to see him drive off in his cab.

"Mr. Daly, who stood bowing on the sidewalk when the cab drove off, now turned into the house, and—no doubt from seeing my extreme agitation—stared at me.

"'That gentleman was Lord John Daw?' I said, as I leaned up against the side of the hall for support, for I was trembling so that I could not stand.

"Mr. Daly stared longer, and then answered hesitatingly:

"'Yes, Miss, that gentleman was Lord John Daw.'

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"'Would you be so kind as to give me his address?' I asked.

"Daly hesitated so long that I hastened to add:

"'I am Mrs. Dawson, of St. Margaret's. I wish to ask news of my husband, who has been missing for some months. He was a friend of Lord John Daw's.'

"Daly gathered his lips together for a long whistle, but suppressed it as he gazed at me and muttered:

"'Mrs. Dawson—of St. Margaret's? Oh! Ah! Yes! It may save his lordship a journey in his weak state. Yes, madam, I will give you his address.'

"And he took a blank card and pencil from his pocket and wrote it.

"'Grove Lodge, Piccadilly,' I read, when he had handed me the card. 'Is that far from here, sir? I do not know London at all.'

"'Yes, it is some distance. Allow me, madam. Step into this room and sit down. I will send for a cab,' he said, throwing open a door on the right that led into a room occupied by one gray-haired old man, in a rusty suit of black, who sat writing at a high desk in the lightest corner, between two windows.

"I thankfully accepted his kindness, and sat down to wait. He went out to order the cab, and he sent me in a glass of wine and a biscuit—all of which I thought unusual attentions to a stranger, but which I partly understood as being done in the interest of Lord John Daw. Ah, Heaven! The dreadful truth was beginning to break upon my mind, though I resisted it with all my strength.

"When the cab was at the door Mr. Daly himself came and put me in it and told the driver where to go.

"I had plenty of time for reflection as I drove on. Reflection! Good Heaven! to what end did my reflections tend? That the gentleman I had seen at Daly's office

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was the one who under the name of John Dawson had married me, was certain; yet he was known here as Lord John Daw! And Lord John Daw was known to have a wife living abroad and was accused of having—

'That way madness lay!'

"I dared not pursue the thought! The suspense I felt was as the grip of an iron hand upon my heart.

"The distance was long and the old horse was slow, so that it was near noon when we drew up before Grove Lodge, which was at the other end of Piccadilly.

"It was an imposing building of dark stone, square in form, and with armorial carvings over the portals. It stood back from the street, and a semi-circular carriage-drive led from the iron gates to and from the house.

"We drove up to the stately doors, which were reached by several stone steps.

"I alighted and ascended these steps and knocked. All the pulses of my body seemed to stand still while I waited for admittance.

"I doubted whether I should be admitted, until an inspiration came to me, which I resolved to follow.

"The door was opened by a pompous looking servant in livery.

"'Is Lord John Daw at home?' I inquired.

"'I don't know, mum; I'll see. What name?' inquired the man in his turn.

"'Tell his lordship that it is a person from Mr. Daly's office; his lordship was expecting one,' I replied, telling the truth, for I *had* come from Daly's, from whose office my lord *was* expecting some one, though not me exactly.

"'Sit down here, mum, and I'll see if his lordship is at home,' said the man, showing me into a small waiting-room on the left of the hall, where I sat down, or rather, dropped down into a chair, for I was ill with apprehen-

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sion of—I hardly knew *what* confirmation of my worst fears.

"'Please—give me—a glass of water,' I said, for I feared I should faint.

"'The man brought it to me, and then went on his errand.

"I drank the water, sat down the glass, and summoned all my fortitude to support me in this severe ordeal.

"What would be the result of my interview with Lord Daw? He had married me under the name of John Dawson. And he had a wife living on the continent! If this were so, what was I? What was my child? I *would* not think! I pushed off thought!

"I *could* not be, I said to my aching heart—It *could* not be that my husband had so deeply deceived me; and not only me, but my mother, and our minister, and all our old friends. I had not been married in a corner; I had not run away to be married privately. Such marriages I had always been taught to consider as disreputable and dangerous, actually exposing the foolish girl who should venture upon one to deception and dishonor.

"But mine had not been such.

"Mine had been solemnized in our parish church, by our own minister, and in the presence of all our friends, and with the consent and blessing of my mother.

"How, then, could ruin come to my marriage—such ruin as threatened me and my child? It could not! It could not! There must be some mistake! *I might* have been deceived in imagining this Lord John Daw to be identical with my missing husband. I should find out my mistake when I should come to face his lordship, and then I could explain my intrusion by telling him that I wished to see him to inquire after my husband, as *he* had been one of Mr. Dawson's referees.

"But—on the other hand—If there were *no* mistake?

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If—I *would* not think any longer! If I continued to do so I should go crazy!

"My distracted reflections were happily interrupted by the re-entrance of the footman, who said:

"'His lordship is at home, mum, and will see you. Please walk up.'"

CHAPTER IX.

CONFRONTED.

"Through lofty corridors and suits of sumptuous apartments I followed the footman, until finally he paused before a pair of highly polished black walnut doors, opened one leaf, and announced:

"'The lady from Daly's, my lord,' and closed it behind me.

"I found myself standing in a handsomely appointed library, at the upper end of which, at a table covered with books and papers, sat a gentleman writing.

"Trembling, I walked up the room.

"He arose as I approached, saying:

"'You come from my solicitor, madam. I had scarcely expected to see a lady on this business.'

"I threw aside my vail and stood before him. He looked at me for an instant as if uncertain of my identity—for I suppose, indeed, that trouble had already changed me—and then turning ghastly pale he dropped into his chair again, exclaiming:

"'Ruth! *You* here! Great Heavens, Ruth!'

"I could not answer him. I could not even speak, or withdraw my eyes from his face, but stood leaning on the table for support and looking at him. How blanched and wasted he was! Was it from sickness, sorrow or

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remorse? His elbow rested on the table, and his pallid forehead was bowed upon his emaciated hand. I was very sorry for him.

"'Ruth! Ruth!' he said at last, 'what has brought you here?'

"'To ask two questions: Are you Mr John Dawson or Lord John Daw? and am I your wife or—what?' I inquired.

"'You are my wife! In the sight of Heaven, Ruth, you are my wife!' he answered, excitedly.

"'How many wives, then, does Heaven allow a man to have at a time?' I could not help asking.

"'Ruth! Ruth! for pity's sake, do not mock me! I am a sinful and unhappy man! But not so sinful and much more unhappy than you know!'

"'I am very sorry for you,' I breathed.

"'Oh! Ruth, if you knew all you would indeed pity me! I never meant to wrong you, child! Heaven knows I never did! When I married you I thought I was free to do so. When I discovered my mistake I would have kept the discovery from you until I could have righted that wrong, and when the power to do that was taken from me forever, disappointment and grief and remorse threw me down upon a bed of illness, from which I have only just arisen. I have come up to town, not to make full atonement to you for the past—for that can never be made—but to do all that I can under the circumstances. That was the business which took me to Daly's office this morning, and I intended going down to St. Margaret's this afternoon. Oh! Ruth, I had intended to keep all this miserable business from your knowledge; but since you have found out the very worst, you should know *all*—all the palliating circumstances that led to my fatal error. Ruth, will you hear my defence?'

"'I *wish* to hear it,' I faltered; but my strength was

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failing, the floor seemed sinking under my feet, the walls turning.

"'Ruth! Ruth!' he cried, and in an instant caught me up to prevent me from falling, and laid me on the lounge, and knelt beside me.

"'That will do. I have not fainted. I am not going to faint,' I said.

"He brought me a glass of wine, but I declined to take it.

"'I *do* wish to hear what you have to say in explanation of—of—your marriage with me,' I said, rising with difficulty and seating myself on a chair, for already my husband seemed to have become a stranger, with whom it was not proper that I should be at ease, or otherwise than formal and distant.

"'Are you ready to hear me now, Ruth?' he inquired, as he took his own chair again, at a little distance from mine, as if he, too, recognized that a wall had risen between us.

"'Yes, if you please; I am—very anxious to hear—anything that may—excuse you. Oh! in spite of all!—in spite of the fact that this is our last—our very last meeting on earth—I cannot *bear* to think ill of you! I long, I *long* to think well of you."

"'God bless you, Ruth! but before I enter upon my miserable story, tell me, my child, what brought you up to London and to the knowledge of our misfortune? I see that you are in deep mourning, and I gather from that that you have lost your mother.'

"My mother is in heaven. I have not lost *her;* but you are here in the room with me and I have lost you! O! what a difference!"

"He winced at this. I had hurt him, though I did not mean to do so.

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"'Tell me,' he repeated. 'what brought you to London?'

"'Anxiety to find *you*. I had not heard from you for two months.'

"'I was stricken down with illness, and unable to write or send to you,'

"'Yes, I understand that *now*, but I did not *then*; so, when my mother passed away, I gave up the lease of her house, and came here to seek Lord John Daw or Mr. Richard Daly—your two references—to get news of you. I was in Mr. Daly's office when you passed through the room on your way out this morning.'

"'You were! I did not notice any one!'

"'I sat in a corner, and my veil was down; but I saw you pass and recognized you. I heard the men there call you Lord John Daw. I knew from newspaper report something of Lord John Daw's history. I asked his address, obtained it, and came here to satisfy myself. Well! I have done so! You married me under circumstances that require explanation and defence, and now I am waiting to hear them.'

"I believe my forbearance wounded him worse than reproachful words could have done.

"He entered upon his defence, which was a much better one than I had dared to hope; for he proved that when he married me in St. Margaret's Church, in the presence of my mother and of our friends and neighbors, he was acting in as good faith as was any one present, and was as innocent of wrong doing as I was myself.

"He said:

"'I declare to you, my much wronged darling, that I never knew love until I met you. Years ago, I married, as many young men do, from a superficial admiration of a very beautiful woman. She was the wealthy heiress

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of a noble family, and all the world said, "What a very suitable match" was ours, although, as was afterwards shown, there was no love and only liking on either side.

"We lived together several years, spending the fashionable season in this house, the Christmas holidays at Lowood, and the rest of the year in other places—in the Highlands, at the seaside, or on the continent. Everywhere my beautiful wife entered freely in society, and was very greatly admired.

"'Yet, withal, I declare that she was not a coquette. Her nature, for good or evil, was too deep and strong for such frivolity. We had, as I said, no "inordinate affection" for each other, yet still we were reasonably happy until—

"'About two years ago, when, at a soiree given in his honor, we met society's great lion of the hour—a German prince who was not only a prince, but a great traveller, explorer, and discoverer in the remote regions of the East.

"'Ruth, I assert, upon my honor, that if I had ever loved the woman who bore and dishonored my name, I could not even now speak of her, or of the man who took her from me, with the calmness that you see.

"'As I look back at their fatal acquaintance, which I saw from its commencement, for we were presented to his highness at the same time, I see that it was a case of serpent fascination at first sight.

"'Olgus of Schwartzburg was not young or handsome—he was no Apollo in form, or Adonis in face, that he should have drawn a beautiful, high-born woman out of her senses and out of her sphere; but quite the contrary. He was a tall, dark, rugged, swarthy ruffian of forty-five years, whose long hair and untrimmed beard was silvered here and there; yet, withal, he was as the fabled mag-

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netic mountain to the elegant, graceful, blonde beauty whom he attracted to her destruction.

"'It is said that love is blind and renders its victims so; but I think that the want of love is often just as obscuring to the mental vision. I think it must have been my want of love and of jealousy that made me so utterly blind to what soon became apparent to all our circle.

"'First of all, on the very evening the mutual fascination between the "lion" and the lady, the "beauty" and the "beast," was observed and commented upon by all who saw them together,

"'Next, my lady gave a garden party in honor of the lion, and from that time they met daily, for he was a frequent morning visitor at this house, and she made it a point to be present at every party given to him, of which there was one somewhere every night in the week except Sundays.

"'This went on for weeks and months until the last of the season, and still, Ruth, though all London was ringing with her name in connection with his, I was blind and deaf to what was passing around me, until, one fatal morning, when we were ready to leave London for Lowood, it was discovered that the lion and the lady had gone off together.

"'Yes, Ruth, *she*, a bishop's daughter, the idol of society, a wife and a mother, had left her sphere, her home, her husband and her infant son, our only child, not then a year old, to share the life of a wild adventurer a royal ruffian, never handsome, no longer young, and, who had nearly lapsed into barbarism from his long association with savages.

"'Of all the sensations society had ever felt, that was, perhaps, the severest—that "Beauty and the Beast," as they were called, had fled together! Not her worst

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enemy had ever dreamed that her ladyship's caprice could carry her as far as that.

"'As for myself my pride was deeply wounded. I placed my case in the hands of one of the most eminent legal firms in the city, with instructions to collect evidence and prepare the petition for divorce, which I meant to bring before the House of Lords at the next meeting of Parliament.

"'Then I placed my child in the care of my married sister, shut up my town-house, and left London for the continent.

"'I dropped the name that my lady had made a by-word in English circles throughout Europe, and I kept only one of the unnecessary middle names with which my sponsors had liberally endowed me. I stand in "Burke" as John Dawson Danmore Daw. I travelled over the continent as John Dawson. I avoided all fashionable resorts for fear of meeting people who would recognize me under my chosen name.

"'Now, Ruth, comes an incident that was destined to deceive me, to our ruin. I was in Paris during the month of March, about eight months after the elopement, and was about to start for England, for parliament had met and I was anxious to push my petition for divorce—when, the night before the journey, I took up a copy of the London *Times* and read *this* paragraph—with what emotions you may judge.'

"Here Lord John Daw unlocked a drawer in his table, drew from it a newspaper and passed it over to me, saying:

"'Read that marked item.'

"I read it, and I remembered it, word for word. It was this:

"'It will be seen in another column in the dispatches from our consul at Alexandria, that news has been

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received of the massacre of the exploring party headed by Olgus of Schwartzburg, who, while crossing the Great Desert and near the Oasis of Onokari, were surprised by a large party of Bedouins and cut off to a man. Among the victims was the misguided and unfortunate Lady John Daw, whose elopement with the famous explorer caused such a scandalous sensation last winter.'

"When I had finished this paragraph I turned to the 'foreign news,' referred to in the first column, and read the full details of the massacre, with time, place, and circumstance minutely recorded; even to the plunder of the dead body of the English lady, and the carrying off the jewels that had been carefully concealed about her person.

"'Well, Ruth,' said Lord John Daw, when I had finished reading, 'what do you think now? Was I justified in believing myself to be a free man?'

"'You were justified,' I answered.

"'And you forgive me?' he asked.

"'I have never accused you,' I replied.

"'Ruth, I went to England the next day, and on my arrival in London my first work was to withdraw my petition for divorce. Death had done the business more effectually than the House of Lords could have done it.

"'And then I left London and wandered over England, still under my middle name of Dawson, for I was still sore on the subject of my domestic troubles, which I heard everywhere discussed.

"'It was in May of that year that I first saw your sweet face, Ruth, and first knew what it was to love. This was one day when the stage had set me down at the principal hotel of Bolton, where I had to wait some hours for the coach across country that I wanted to go by. After my early dinner at the hotel I went to the town hall to while away the time at a charity fair that I understood

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was in progress there. I saw you, Ruth, at one of the tables, and in your face received such a revelation of beauty, purity and peace as soothed and almost healed my sick soul. I did not get the chance to speak to you, for you were surrounded and busy waiting on customers, and I had to hurry away to catch my coach.

"'I found time, however, to inquire about you from the landlord of the hotel, who informed me that your mother was the widow of the late Dr. Duane, and that she kept a lodging-house during the season at the neighboring village of St. Margaret's.

"'Then I resolved to go to St. Margaret's before the commencement of the regular season, and secure all the rooms your mother had to let, for the whole summer, that I might have the opportunity of forming your acquaintance, and seeing whether your character and disposition corresponded with your countenance and manner.

"'I was still under the name of John Dawson, which was not an alias, but my own legal name, so far as it went. I engaged nearly the whole of the widow's house for the season; spent the whole summer among you, won the esteem and confidence of all your people, and wooed, won and married you, meaning at some future time, not then far distant, to give you the pleasant surprise of hearing from my lips my own real rank and your true title.

"'But, oh, great Heaven! how adversely everything turned out. Oh, Ruth! I was very rudely awakened from my dream of happiness! We had returned from our wedding tour and were living at our pretty villa at Croyden, where I choose that we should remain incog. for a few months, because I did not like to reappear in London so soon after the scandal of the past spring, and we were expecting your mother to visit us, when one

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morning — do you remember? — you handed me the *Morning Post*, and pointed out a paragraph that you said concerned a friend of mine—Lord John Daw.

"'It was a paragraph that contained the death warrant of my peace! It was the very first inkling of intelligence that I had yet received of the rumor that my wife was still living. You remember that it stated that Lady John Daw had been seen in Bagdad, in company with the German prince.

"'You remember I took the paper and left the room. I did so to conceal my agitation. I did not believe the story, but still it disturbed me; and, ah, Heaven! before many days the rumor of Lady John's continued existence was confirmed.

"'But she was no longer with Prince Olgus of Schwartzburg—*his* bones were bleaching on the Great Sahara Desert; but she was the wife (?) of an Arab chief, who had bought her of her Bedouin captor, who had not murdered her, as was reported, but who had carried her beauty off to the best market. Such was the truth brought home to us by some of our returning missionaries.'

"'But why, oh why, when you had made this discovery of your wife's existence, and knew that our union was illegal and sinful, oh, *why* did you not part with me then at once?' I demanded, for I could not bear to think of him as doing wilful wrong.

"'My dear,' he gently replied, 'our union was illegal, but not sinful; that I utterly deny. What though my false wife were still living? Was she not at the antipodes, the companion of a heathen, and as dead to me, yea verily, more dead to me than if the sands of the Sahara covered her body? Why did I not part with you? I would not. To have done so would have been

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a cruel and useless sacrifice—at least it seemed so to me then.

"'I had done you all the evil that you could suffer at my hands. You were destined to become a mother. Should I send you back to your native village with a blighted name? Or, should I place you among strangers, with a broken heart? No, Ruth; if my soul's salvation had been lost by my silence, and my continued personal care of you, it should have gone to eternal perdition for your sake.

"'Let me go on, Ruth. Let me tell my miserable story out. I kept all papers containing the least mention of Lord John Daw and of his domestic troubles from your sight. Your mother came to visit us, and you were very happy in her company—happier still in the preparations you were making for the little stranger you expected.

"'Could I ruin that happiness by telling you, or even letting you suspect the miserable truth? No, Ruth, no. I continued to live with you in comparative obscurity under the name of Dawson; and I re-instituted measures for my divorce from the false woman who had done all she could to wreck my life.

"'Parliament met again in February, and my petition was once more brought before the House of Lords; but by reason of great pressure of other business, it was not taken up till April.

"'Meanwhile I took you down to your mother's house that you might be far from the scene of this suit. I remained with you there until after our babe was born, because it was not necessary for me to be in London.

"'And now, do you remember the morning when I suddenly received a letter, recalling me to the city?'

"'Oh, too well,' I answered.

"'That letter was from my solicitor, informing me that the attorney who acted for Lady John Daw had

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brought counter charges against me, in resistance of my suit.

"'I left you and hastened up to London. I found affairs much worse than my wildest fears had anticipated. My lady had left, or had placed her interests in very skillful, not to say unscrupulous hands.

"'I found that I had been placed under espionage ever since I had taken the initial steps toward my first petition for a divorce. I will not torture myself or you by going into particulars.

"I remained in London, and struggled hard for my freedom, but in vain. It was that countercharge that killed my suit and nearly killed me; for when my cause was lost, and the decision made against me, I suddenly fell ill, and lay for eight weeks a helpless invalid.

"'As soon as I was able to do so I sat up in bed and wrote a few lines telling you that I had been ill, but that I should be with you as soon as I should be able to travel so far.

"'I never got the letter,' I said.

"'No, for you must have left St. Margaret's before my letter could have reached the village. To-day I should have started for that place, had not your unexpected arrival prevented me.'

"'I am glad I saved you the journey. You are not near strong enough yet to undertake so long a one,' I sighed.

"'And now, Ruth, you understand my position. If you had not yourself discovered it, you should never have known it from me. I should have taken you to some foreign country where the legality of our union could not have been questioned, and we should have lived happily together until death.'

"'Oh, no! Oh, no! You would never have done that! You, a Christian man, would never have so

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deceived me to my own destruction and to yours,' I burst forth, for—though he was henceforth to be nothing to me, I *did* want to think the best of him.

"'I should have deceived you to the day of your death, for your peace, and safety, and happiness, Ruth, and the sin, if there were to be sin, would have been mine only, and I should have been willing to bear it for your sake. Have I not told you that I would have perilled, nay *lost* my soul for your sake? But now, Ruth, unhappily you know the worst. You know what I would have concealed from you with my life. You know that, by English law, I am bound to a woman who by some other law is now the wife of a barbarian! Knowing the very worst, what have you to say, Ruth? What must be the end of this? I place our fate in your hands. You shall be the arbiter of our destiny. What is it to be, Ruth?'

"And as he spoke he left his chair, sank down by my side, and dropped his head upon my shoulder.

"I could not repel him then. I could hardly speak, for my heart was breaking. Oh, I loved him so much!—but I managed to breathe forth some words like these:

"'We must do our plain duty. We must part here, now and forever! Come; let us be strong and let us say a kind good-bye to each other?'

"'Ruth!' he cried, raising his head and looking wild, 'you do not mean it! You cannot be so cruel! so irrational; Ruth, *could* that woman be more entirely lost and dead to me, in her grave, than she is in that Arab chief's tent?'

"'No,' I admitted, 'she could not.'

"'Then why should her continued existence keep us apart?'

"'Her great sin would not justify *our* sin,' I said.

"'Ruth! it is superstition, not religion, that governs you!' he exclaimed. And then he went over the whole

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ground again—the cruelty, the injustice, the unreasonableness of the principle that would render the mere existence of that guilty woman in Arabia a bar to our harmless bliss.

"'I cannot argue with you,' I said, as gently as I could—'I cannot answer you at all; yet I know that we must part. Oh, John! this world is *not* the only one to live for!'

"A terrible scene followed. He argued, pleaded, raved, and reproached me by turns. I could not meet his arguments; they *seemed* to be so right and reasonable, yet I knew them to be false and sinful. I could hardly resist his pleading, or bear his reproaches; I know not *how* I withstood him, for oh! I loved him so much and I pitied him so deeply.

"*Indeed* I have no clear remembrance of how I got out of that room, or out of that house. I know I left him in bitter anger against me. When I got back to my old cousin's house I resolved never again to subject myself to the terrible temptation of his presence and his pleadings, and I rejoiced that he did not know my address and would never be able to find me in the great wilderness of London.

"To my old cousin that evening I told the whole story, leaving her, at its end, with a much better opinion of Lord John Daw than she had had at the time she formed her estimate of his character from libelous newspaper reports.

"She agreed with me, however, that I had done quite right in parting with Lord John Daw, at once and forever.

"'It does seem very hard to bear, under the circumstances, and it almost looks as if he had the right on his side in wanting you to stay with him; but there stands the law of God, and it must not be broken by Christians.

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But you must not have the trial of meeting him again, honey. It would be too much for flesh and blood to bear. You must go to America along of us.

"'*Are* you going to America then? *Is* it settled, and *will* you take me out with you?' I eagerly inquired, catching at this chance of deliverance.

"'Yes, we are all going. It was all finally settled this very day. We go in the first packet that sails, and we will be very glad to take you along with us. Why, laws! for that matter, we would be very happy to take all our friends and acquaintances out to that foreign country to keep us from being lonesome and homesick.'

"'Thank Heaven!' I fervently exclaimed.

"The very next day Mrs. Fletcher began preparations for her voyage by advertising her business for sale. It was not so easily disposed of to advantage, however and this caused some delay, so that the ship in which we had hoped to sail went without us.

"Other difficulties arose with the other interested parties, so that it was months before we were ready to emigrate.

"In the meantime I kept myself closely hidden from Lord John Daw. I saw carefully worded advertisements in the papers, from time to time, to the effect that if R—h E—n who called at the office of Richard Daly, Lincoln's Inn Fields, on such a date, would repeat her visit or send her address, she would hear something to her advantage.

"Of course I knew whence they emanated and to what they tended. I cannot say I disregarded them; for I cried over more than one.

"So passed the months until in the early autumn, my cousins having all settled their affairs satisfactorily, we sailed for America in the ship *Phaeton*—having on board Mr. Marry, the English Minister to Washington; Mr.

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Moore, the Irish poet; and other gentlemen and some ladies.

"We had a very slow passage, and lay becalmed for many days. We finally landed at Norfolk early in November, and from Norfolk we went to Washington, our destination, by stage.

"There is little to tell of our residence in the new capitol. My cousins entered into the building speculations in their small way, and, like too many others, lost nearly all their little capital, and finally emigrated to Kentucky, where they have, in fifteen years, redeemed their fortunes and grown rich.

"I declined their invitation to go with them and share their fortunes in the West, and decided to remain here. The truth is, my dear, that in my cousin's house, where the two families and the old mother lived together, forming a very large household. I was a sort of unpaid upper servant, having the whole care and labor of the establishment, without wages, and with the name of a dependent on their charity. So, though they were very kind to me, I decided not to go with them.

"I sought out a home for myself and you away from the fever-breeding marshes of the city, and I found it here, in this very house, where I have lived for fifteen years. You were then five years old.

"I put out a little card at the gate, to the effect that I would take in plain sewing, and soon got enough of it, and in time I got all the custom of the college students, in mending and darning for them. And here I have been content, if not happy.

"Soon I put you, Roderick, in the parish school, and it was your own talent and industry that won for you there the approbation of your masters, and finally gained your admission into the college, from which you have graduated with honor.

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"As to Lord John Daw. Of course, I have known for years of his residence in Washington; but he must have been there a long time before I did know it, for I never discovered the fact until about a year after the departure of my cousins, when, in an old newspaper that came around a parcel of work, I casually saw his name in connection with some real estate transfers.

"It gave me a great shock and brought back all the old woe for a while; but I got over it, as I had got over harder things. Since that I have seen and heard his name occasionally; but we have never met, even in public; for this obscure cottage in the northwest of Georgetown is in every way too far removed from the sphere of 'the millionaire lord' to render our meeting likely, or even possible.

"His name, written or spoken, had ceased to disturb my heart until to-day, when the amazing announcement was made to me that *he*, Lord John Daw, my once supposed husband and your father, had unconsciously accepted the application of his own unconscious son to become his confidential secretary. Then the story so long withheld from you, and designed to be told you only on your majority or on my death, had to be told. You have it now—the whole truth—and if I have not repeated conversations and writings literally word for word, I have reported their true substance; for, as I told you this history, my mind seemed so to lapse back into the past that I seemed to live, act, and suffer, to speak and to hear, as I did then; and so, in a half trance, I have reproduced whole scenes in a way that fills me with wonder.

"Now, Roderick, it is for you to judge whether you will accept this situation in the house of Lord John Daw, or decline it, and also whether you will reveal to him the

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close relationship between you or leave him still in ignorance," concluded the lady.

"What would you have me to do, mother, dear?" inquired the young man, who had listened to the story with so many conflicting emotions of grief, wrath, pity, and wonder that he could not yet bring his thoughts and feelings into sufficient harmony to reason clearly or judge justly.

"I would like you to do precisely as you please in this matter, my dear Roderick."

"Have you really *no* preference one way or the other whether I shall take the situation or decline it—whether I reveal myself to Lord John Daw as his son or leave him in ignorance of the fact?" persisted the young man.

Ruth Dunn leaned her head upon her hand and reflected for a few minutes, and then replied slowly:

"All this has come so suddenly upon me that I have not had time to give the subject due consideration. Yet —yes, now I think I *have* a wish in the matter."

"What is it, dear mother? Your wish shall be followed, whatever it be, for you are the only one in the world to whom I owe any duty," said the young man taking and pressing her hand.

"Nay, nay, you must do as you please—indeed you must."

"But, at least, tell me your wish," earnestly urged the young man.

"I would myself rather never see Lord John Daw again. To do so would be *too* painful," began the lady, when her son eagerly interrupted her.

"Then, mother, dear, you never shall. We will have nothing whatever to do with his lordship, and I will write to Mr. Richard Daly and decline the situation."

"No, no, do not be precipitate. I was about to say, though I wish never to meet Lord John Daw myself—

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yet—now that I have grown old and you have grown up, and are educated, and are—*what you are*, I should like your father to see *you*. I think he would be very proud of you, and take great pleasure in advancing your interests in this world, and I know he could do that successfully," said the mother, looking fondly and proudly on her handsome and manly boy.

"So you wish me to accept the situation, mother, dear?"

"Yes, if you like; I think it will be the best opening for your advancement in life."

"And you wish me to tell Lord John Daw who I am?"

"Yes—that is, if you like. I think it would be best. And remember always, Roderick, that Lord John Daw was not so much to be censured as would appear on the surface. He was the victim of 'circumstances over which,' truly, *he* had 'no control.'"

"But suppose, mother, dear, he should not believe me to be the son he left in infancy in England twenty years ago, and has not seen since. Suppose he should repudiate my claim?" suggested Roderick Dunn.

"He could not do that. Your close resemblance to himself in his youth, only you are taller and stouter than he ever was, and your still closer resemblance to his eldest son, whom I have once casually seen, would preclude all doubt on the subject," confidently replied the lady.

"Then suppose he does believe and accept me what about yourself, dear mother?"

"Oh I? I would live, as heretofore, in retirement. Do not think of me in this affair."

Roderick Dunn looked affectionately at his mother, and though he *did* think of her, and of her mostly, in this affair, he kept his thoughts to himself for the time being.

Presently he inquired:

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"Mother, did I understand you to say that *your* father's name was Duane or Dunn?"

"It was Duane, my dear, and when I discovered that my marriage was illegal I resumed my maiden name of Duane as the only one to which I or you had any lawful right."

"How came we to be called Dunn, then, mother? I do not ask out of mere curiosity."

"Because our name of Duane became abbreviated in the lips of the common people into Dunn."

"Oh, I see! just as they call Greenfield 'Grinfil,' and St. John 'Sinjun,' and so on.',

"Yes, when you were a boy, your companions called you Rody Dunn, but I did *not* know that your name was spelled so until, years after, I saw it on the college list of students spelled 'Roderick Dunn.' I never cared about setting the orthography right. I thought the spelling of little consequence. Perhaps I was wrong."

"Well, then, as I wrote to Mr. Daly and applied for the secretaryship under the name of Roderick Dunn, as such I shall present myself to Lord John Daw, and accept the situation, mother dear."

"I am glad you have so decided, Roderick."

"And I am well content that this 'brief' of my name has been thrust upon me by the people and the college, for Dunn conveys no possible memories or associations of ideas to Lord John Daw, as Duane might, which is fortunate, for I do not intend to make my real position known to my lord until I find out for myself what his lordship is made of," said the young man thoughtfully.

"And always remember your duty Roderick," gently urged the lady.

"I shall endeavor to do so, mother," replied the youth.

This ended the conversation for the time being.

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The next morning was that appointed for the interview between Lord John Daw and the candidate for the situation he had to offer.

Mrs. Dunn rose early as usual, put her room in order, and got the breakfast.

Roderick Dunn had been busy all the morning in the little den at the head of the stairs that he called his bedroom. He had kept the door bolted on the inside so that his mother did not see him until she called him to breakfast.

"It is seven o'clock, Roderick, and your appointment is for eleven," she said, when she had rapped.

"All right, mother. There is plenty of time," he answered, as he opened the door.

Oh, you are quite ready! Then come to breakfast; it is on the table," she said, leading the way to her own room.

They sat down together.

They had scarcely finished breakfast, however when a messenger came for Mrs. Dunn—a neighbor's boy—saying that a certain Mrs. Smoot living half a mile up the road, was very ill and quite alone, and would Mrs. Dunn come and see her.

"Yes, certainly," said the kind-hearted lady, who was always a sure resort in time of trouble to her poor neighbors,

She quickly washed her dishes, tidied her room, and got ready for her charitable errand.

"Roderick," she said to her son, "I shall probably be back before you return from the city; so when you go out, dear, you may leave the key in its usual hiding-place under the front door step."

"Very well, mother dear, you will find it there."

The lady went away, and the young man's whole aspect changed into one of relief and satisfaction.

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"How very fortunate my dear mother is called out just now," he said to himself, "for now I can make all my arrangements without exciting her suspicions or disturbing her mind. And *now*, my lord, if you are not all that my mother believes you to have been—if you *have* deceived her and played her false—*take care of yourself!*"

He shut himself up in his room for another hour, and then, watching his opportunity to go forth unseen, he stole from the house, and locking the door behind him, and hiding the key as he had been told, he went forth to meet his father, and his fate.

CHAPTER X.

MYSTERY OF MYSTERIES.

Ruth Dunn remained in close attendance upon her sick neighbor until evening, when the opportune arrival of the patient's mother relieved the volunteer nurse of her duties.

It was quite dark when Ruth drew near her own home, and she was rather surprised, on looking up at the windows, to see that they showed no light.

"Roderick is not in yet; he must have returned from the city and gone out again. I'll ask Mrs. Brown," she said, as she felt under the doorstep for the key of the room, and found it there.

She went up stairs and opened her humble apartment and looked around, wondering a little to see everything just as she had left it, and speculating as to whether her son had been absent the whole day, or whether he had returned and gone out again.

"I will ask Mrs. Brown," she said again, as she lighted her lamp, closed the window shutters, and laid off her bonnet.

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But she was saved the trouble of going down stairs again, for the slow footsteps of her landlady were heard coming up, and as the door stood wide open Mrs. Brown entered without knocking—a tall, thin, pale woman of about forty-five, with small features, weary looking, light blue eyes, and scanty light brown hair, which she wore twisted into a small knot at the back of the head, and twisted into two little curls on each hollow temple. She panted and leaned against the jamb of the door as she stood. But what could be expected? She was the wife of a poor man, and the mother of thirteen children —seven in Heaven, and six on earth.

"Oh! I am so glad to see you, but sorry you tired yourself coming up stairs. I was just going down. Sit in this rocking-chair and rest," said Mrs. Dunn, drawing forward her own favorite seat.

"Been ironing all the whole blessed day, 'cept when I stopped to get meals. Eh? and it is as hot as if it was July instead o' May!" panted the woman, dropping into the rocking-chair and wiping her damp face and neck with her blue checked apron.

"Yes, it has been a warm day for working over a fire," said Ruth, sympathetically, as she handed her palm-leaf fan to her visitor.

"Warm! Oh, I tell you!" exclaimed the latter, fanning herself for a few seconds, and then dropping the fan upon her lap, as if even that exertion was too much for her. "But I didn't come up here to complain of the heat. Complaining never does nobody no good. I came to give you this note, which was left at the door this afternoon by a strange boy," added the visitor, fumbling in the pocket of her faded calico dress, and fetching forth a sealed letter, which she handed to Mrs. Dunn.

Ruth saw at a glance that the missive came from her son, for the superscription was in his handwriting.

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"Roderick has not been home, then, since he went out this morning!" she said, as she opened the letter.

"Bless you, no, not as I know of; but I'm afeared some one else has, which I meant to tell you of—howsoever, read your letter, as I see you're anxious to do, and I'll tell you all about it. I don't see as anything's missing, 's far's I can see," added the landlady, glancing around.

Ruth Dunn was for the moment balanced between anxiety to read her son's letter and curiosity to hear the landlady's news; but the former impulse won, and she read as follows (the letter being without date, as it was without signature, except in the initials):

"DEAREST MOTHER IN THE WORLD: The solemn interview is over, and my lord is pleased to be satisfied with my appearance, credentials and chirography, and has accepted me as his lordship's private and confidential secretary.

"My lord has highly important work, which he wishes to set me about immediately.

"I cannot, for the life of me, see the importance of the work, for—will you believe it?—it is only to take down from my lord's lips his lordship's dream of the preceding night, before my lord shall forget it. I fear my lord's brain is not of the vigorous texture it could boast in the ante-matrimonial and mortification days, when his lordship led the liberal party in the House of Commons.

"Am I writing unfilially? Well, my lord has put in no claim for filial honor. The name, Dunn, suggested no remembrance of Duane; nor did the family resemblance, with the Daw blaze in the forehead (as if we were a race of horses) bring suspicion to the mind, compunction to the heart, or tears to the eyes, of my lord—a fact that may be accounted for by another fact, that my lord is about half blind from, as I understand, a weakness in the optic nerve, which, indeed, renders the presence of an amanuensis and secretary a positive necessity to his lordship. The family resemblance of which you spoke, dear mother, is positively startling, as I had an opportunity of seeing as I passed through the library and

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came face to face with a full-length, life-sized portrait of Mr. John Daw, my lord's eldest son, when I thought—I actually *did*—that I was meeting my own reflection in a full-length mirror! I had forgotten for a moment the difference in dress.

"Whether my lord will ever notice this resemblance on closer inspection, or ask me any questions, or whether I shall be moved to make myself known to his lordship, must depend much upon circumstances.

"I write now only to tell you that I shall not be home to-night, nor, in fact, until my lord pleases to let me off. When I do see you I will give you all the particulars of my interview with his lordship; and in the meantime rest assured that I am your very loving son,

"R. D."

Ruth Dunn read over this letter with mixed feelings of pleasure and annoyance. She was pleased that her son had received the situation and the good opinion of his patron; but she was annoyed by the slightly sarcastic tone of the writer, and his frequent ironical use of the terms "my lord" and "his lordship." She sighed as she folded the paper.

"I hope you haven't got no bad news," said Mrs. Brown, who always emphasized with double negatives.

"Oh, no, this is a note from my son, saying that he will not be able to come home to-night. He has just secured a good situation," Ruth explained.

"Ay, ay, that is a great thing for him, and you too! And wot a steddy young man Mr. Roderick is—and *that* gifted and highly eddicated! You should take downright, solid comfort in Mr. Roderick."

"I do," said the mother; but didn't you say that you had something to tell me? that some one had called to see me, or something of the kind?

"Oh, to be sure! though I don't know as to the calling to *see* you. I was afraid as it was a sneak thief! But

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you haint missed nothing have you?" said the landlady looking around.

"No," replied Ruth, hastily rising and running to examine her bureau drawers, which she found locked as she had left them, with the keys in her pocket.

"Nor in Mr. Roderick's room nuther?" inquired the landlady.

"No," exclaimed Ruth; hastily looking into the little den—"why do you ask? No one could have got into these rooms. The door was locked and the key hidden where I found it when I came back. What do you mean?"

"Well, I hope the house aint haunted, that's all! but not an hour ago Nancy Warthen stepped in here on her way home. She had been down to Bridge street to buy a 'levenpenny bit calico dress, and she dropped in to show it to me, and she asked me plump out who that dark-complected, hunch-backed man was up stairs in your rooms, and I told her there was no such man there; for that you had gone out and the place was locked up but she swore that she did see a most dark-complected hunch-backed man a standing at your window as she came along walking under the college wall on the opper-site side of the way."

"Of course the woman was mistaken," said Ruth.

"So I told her; but she'd a swore a hole through an iron pot that she did see the man there, and she said nobody needn't try to argy her out of the evidence of her own two looking eyes."

"It is not worth talking about," said Ruth, "though, of course, we know that she *was* mistaken."

"Of course," admitted the landlady. "Though I felt right down oneasy until you come and unlocked the rooms to see if all was safe—though how any one should have got into your rooms without they had walked up

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the front of the house like a fly and gone into the front windows, I don't know."

"Nor I, either."

"Sartainly; and now, as I'm satisfied, I will bid ye good-night," said the landlady, rising to go.

"Good-night, and thank you for your kindness, Mrs. Brown," said Ruth.

And when she was left alone she removed the fireboard from the fireplace, took a bundle of kindling wood from the closed bottom of her corner cupboard, lighted a little blaze, hung over it her tiny kettle of water, and made herself a cup of tea, which, with a "Medford" cracker, made her simple supper.

After clearing away her small table and replacing her fire-screen, she trimmed her lamp and sat down to sew until long after midnight, to make up for the time she had spent by the bedside of her sick neighbor.

When, about three o'clock, the over-worked woman retired to bed, she fell into a deep sleep of fatigue that lasted unbroken until she was aroused by the loud ringing of the college bells—which were the "getting up bells," not only for the students of that great institution of learning, but also for all the laborers and housewives of the neighborhood.

She arose and hurried through her simple toilet and meagre breakfast, and sat down to her work, hoping that the day would bring a visit from her son. She worked steadily, for this was Friday, and her work was to be returned as usual on Saturday afternoon.

But the forenoon was not yet half over when her landlady toiled up the stairs once more, and sitting down breathless, exclaimed, panting:

"Oh, my dear critter, have you hearn what happened at the Wolf's Head o' Tuesday night, or, raythor, to

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speak correct, o' Wednesday morning, for it were after midnight?"

"No," replied Ruth, remembering vaguely that this was the time when her son Roderick accidentally encountered the wedding party and recognized his beautiful inamorata among the bridal party.

"Well, of all things! And we to hear nothing about it until to-day! But then we do live so far out'n the world and never take no newspapers."

"But what happened?" inquired Ruth.

"My dear woman, such a thing as never was hearn of in all the world before!" said the landlady. "Old Farmer Neverswood, what lives on the opposite way of the tavern, a little farther down the road, he was at market with a cow and calf to sell this morning, and I met him there when I went to buy meat for dinner, and he up and told me all about it. He's a old friend o' ours, you know."

"Yes," assented Ruth, though she did not know.

And then the landlady, in a hurried and excited manner, told the story of the strange adventure of the bridal party at the Wolf's Head.

Ruth Dunn listened with curiosity and interest, thinking secretly that this must have happened after her son had left the inn for his early journey into Washington. But she was filled with dismay at the result.

"What?" she exclaimed. "Did the bridegroom really *desert* the bride?"

"He really did! He ordered his horses and went then *and* there!"

"But—I do not yet understand—*why* did the bridegroom abandon the bride? *What* happened?" inquired Ruth.

"Ah, that's what nobody don't know. He was mumchance on the subjick. So was she. Neither of

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'em never give no explanation; neither him nor her never opened their mouths to tell what was the bustle. He went right off in a huff and her into highstrikes."

"But—was there no suspicion of a quarrel, jealousy, or some misunderstanding? Did none of the servants about the place see or hear anything—as servants are nearly sure to do?"

"Not a thing, except the rumpus. Everybody heard that."

"And no chance word dropped as to the cause?"

"Hi, my dear creetur, what did I tell you? Not one precious word."

"And no reports, Mrs. Brown? That is almost impossible, under the circumstances."

"Well, yes, there is reports, in course, but it all depends on Boots' word. *He* says, as when he went up stairs to gather the boots and shoes from outside the gentlemen's rooms, he saw the bride a walking up and down the upper passage a looking about the floor, and she axed him if he had seen a han'kercher laying round anywhere. And he said 'No.' And she said: 'Well never mind, it would be found in the morning,' and then she opened a door and went into a room, and Boots' he carried his load down stairs and out to the stable loft, where he slept, to clean them; and so *he* heard nothing of the rumpus till next morning, when he brought the boots and shoes back again. But, Lors, it may be only Boots' yarn."

"And seems to be of not the slightest importance, even if it be true," said Ruth; but, at the same time, she remembered that her son had mentioned a handkerchief he had picked up on the stairs, and which he supposed to have been dropped by one of the bridesmaids—the beauty with whom he was insanely in love.

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"Do you know the names of the parties in this strange adventure?" inquired Ruth.

"Well, the groom, he was a Mr. Dawes, I believe, but I don't know who the bride was, and no more do Farmer Neverswood."

"It seems to have been a mad escapade of anger or jealousy. I am sorry for the poor, forsaken bride," said Ruth.

"So be—I, uncommon sorry, though I didn't know her. Farmer says she was took home to her friends by daylight next morning, in an almost dying condition, poor lamb!"

"Who are her friends?"

"Lor, I dunno; no more do he. Well, I can't set here talkin' all day long, with my dinner to get, so I'll bid ye good mornin' honey," said the landlady, rising, with a sigh of weariness, to return to her never-ending work.

Ruth did not leave her sewing to get her own dinner. She darned on till she felt faint from hunger, and then she went down stairs, and bought a half a pint of milk for two cents, off which, with a slice of bread, she dined well.

Then she recommenced her work and mended the college boys' socks until sunset, when the door suddenly opened and her son stood before her.

CHAPTER XI.

RUTH'S RESOLVE.

"Why, Roderick!" she gladly exclaimed.

"Yes, mother, here I am!" said the young man, flinging himself heavily into a chair.

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"I have been looking for you all day, dear."

"Yes, mother, but I could not get off from—*my lord*. I am regularly engaged now."

"Thank Heaven! Tell me all about it, Roderick! How did you like him?"

"I cannot tell yet, mother. I think I shall be able to tolerate him, but his eccentricity borders on insanity, I think."

"He has had much trouble," sighed Ruth.

"And he is so very much older than I expected to find him. Why, his hair is as white as snow, and cut so close that his round head looks like a silver ball. He seems to be at least thirty years older than you, my beautiful mother!"

He is about twenty years my senior; but he did not look so when we first met; gentlemen of the upper classes do not age so fast, I think, as their less fortunate fellow-creatures."

"Well! he looks seventy years old now."

"He is not sixty; but the trouble of his later life must have told heavily upon him. Tell me of the interview."

"Well, I walked from here down to the city, and reached 'The Hill,' as his house is called, about eleven o'clock. Did you ever see his place, mother?"

"Never."

"Well, it is a very fine place; the house is quite a vast edifice, built of red brick, on an eminence northeast of the Capitol grounds, and in the midst of large trees, which seem to have been a part of the primeval forest. As soon as I presented my card to the porter, he called a footman, and said:

"'Show this gentleman up to the library. My lord is expecting him.'

"I followed the footman up the handsomest flight of

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stairs I ever had the honor of ascending and through several sumptuous halls and corridors, that suggested rather a royal palace than a private dwelling, until at length we reached a pair of rosewood doors, which being opened, revealed a pair of crimson cloth doors, which being opened in their turn, admitted us into a fine library.

"The footman announced, simply:

"'Mr. Roderick Dunn to wait upon my lord,' and closed the door behind me.

"It was then, mother, that I thought as I walked up towards the end of the room, where, between two crimson velvet draped windows, hung a full length portrait of Mr. John Daw, that I was meeting a reflection of my own form in a mirror.

"My lord sat at a table, covered with books, papers and writing materials, but he was neither writing nor reading. Wrapped in a black silk dressing-gown, he reclined in an easy-chair, idly and wearily. I approached, bowed and stood before him.

"'Oh! you are—Mr.—Mr.—' he began, and paused.

"'Dunn,' I added.

"'Ay, to be sure! Dunn! The man who has come about the secretary's situation.'

"'Yes, my lord.'

"'Hem! I liked your letter of application and your references. And I like your appearance. It will require time to show whether I shall like *you* in toto.'

"I bowed.

"'Have you a family to support?'

"'I have none, my lord.'

"'No family, no wife, no children?'

"'I have never been married, my lord,' I said.

"'So much the better! So much the better! Marriage is a great mistake, under all circumstances! A fatal

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mistake often, under many! And young Americans, I notice, marry when they are mere children. Bad! bad! bad!

"I bowed, not knowing what else to do.

"Then my lord took up the business of the hour.

"'My sight is failing,' he said, 'and glasses do me no sort of good. I must have a young man to read and write for me, to be eyes and hands for me, to be with me, or near me by day and night—to be my shadow, in fact, and as I realize that this is exacting much, I am willing to pay most liberally for the sacrifice.'

"Again I bowed respectfully, for the want of a more definite answer.

"'Do you think you will be able to meet my requirements?' he demanded.

"'I will endeavor to do so, my lord; and as your lordship was pleased to say, it would require time to show whether you would like me—'

"'Yes, yes, yes; exactly, precisely, we will make the experiment! I should like you to begin at once.'

"'*Now*, my lord?' I asked, in some surprise.

"'Yes, *now*, he answered irritably. 'I said *at once*, did I not? Then draw up your chair, I have a piece of work that must be done immediately. Something that you must take down from my own lips before I forget it, and I have forgotten a good part of it already.'

"Then my lord pushed back his own chair, gave me a place at the table and pointed out the pen, ink and paper.

"I prepared for my work, and my lord opened his lips! To what purpose, do you think?" laughed Roderick Dunn.

"To relate his dreams. You told me so in your letter," replied Ruth.

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"So I did! Yes, my first work was to put on record my lord's dream!"

"Was it so remarkable a dream?" inquired Ruth.

"Not at all—it was a rigmarole about meeting a friend of his earlier manhood, 'say a beloved sister,' he explained to me. He thinks he meets her every night in a dream, and they wander about through Gardens of Eden and talk of the past, and it is this that he wants recorded."

"I fear his mind is giving way."

"I know it is."

"Did you happen to see Mr. John Daw?" inquired Ruth.

"Why, no! of course not! He has gone North on a tour, you know, exclaimed the young man, in surprise at the question.

"Oh, there has been a reconciliation, then! Well, I thought there would be, of course, but not so immediately after such a public scandal! However, I am very glad that they have come together again, very! though it is a very great pity they should have had such a terrible fracas! At a public tavern, too, on the evening of their wedding-day! Who mediated between the two and brought them together? Tell me all about it, dear!"

"I—What in the world are you talking about, mother? What fracas? What scandal?" inquired the young man, who, during his mother's speech, had been gazing at her in surprise and perplexity.

"Why, Roderick, my dear, is it possible that you do not know what happened at the Wolf's Head Tavern on the night you met the wedding party there?"

"'Wolf's Head Tavern!'" repeated the young man, changing color.

"'Well, it must have happened after you had left, as

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you never said a word to me about it: but I thought you must have heard something of such a very terrible event, especially as you were in the very midst of the people most concerned, being at the house of the bridegroom's father."

"Mother! I am utterly incapable of understanding your meaning as yet. Something terrible happened at the Wolf's Head! What was it? No evil, I hope and trust, has come to the lovely little bridesmaid, Eldiva?" inquired the young man, in a strangely agitated voice.

"To Eldiva, the bridesmaid? Oh, no! It was to the bridal pair the calamity came, whatever it was. I certainly thought you must have heard all about it, down there in Washington, though *I* never heard anything of it until to-day, from my landlady, who heard it this morning at market from Farmer Neverswood, who lives near the Wolf's Head Tavern, and knew all the particulars that are known. The catastrophe must have occurred immediately after you left the house, Roderick."

"Yes. Will you tell me what it was, mother?" said the young man, with a strangely troubled look.

"I will tell you all that is known to anybody except the bride and groom; but I assure you that there is a deep mystery behind it, all that must, it seems, remain unexplained, for neither bride nor groom will speak," said Ruth Dunn.

And she began and related to her son the strange story of the abandoned bride as she had heard it from Mrs Brown—leaving, as she said, an unsolved mystery at its conclusion.

Roderick Dunn had grown very pale during the recital of the story, and at its end he arose and walked uneasily up and down the floor; and then, still walking, he said:

"About that lace handkerchief the bootblack saw the

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bride out in search of! You know it could not have been this one that I picked up, for I saw this flutter down from the hand of the beautiful bridesmaid, Eldiva, when she was at the head of the stairs and I at the foot, and before I could overtake and restore it to her she had followed the other two young ladies into the bridal chamber and shut the door, at which, indeed, I had not the courage to knock, even for the purpose of restoring a valuable pocket-handkerchief."

"I fancy you were glad of a good excuse to keep the memento for a little while, Roderick," smiled the lady.

"Yes," said the young man, drawing the elegant little fabric of lace and linen cambric from his bosom and contemplating it affectionately, "but what I wished to say was, that this handkerchief was dropped by the bridesmaid, beautiful Eldiva, and not by the bride: here is her pretty name embroidered in some one's hair on the corner—*Eldiva*. But I must return it as soon as I can find out where to send it."

"I shall have to get it up first," smiled Ruth Dunn.

"That is a terrible mortification to—every one concerned, I should think," said the young man.

"You mean the violent and unexplained separation of the bridal pair."

"Yes, of course; though I cannot see that it affects my lord in any way. He never alluded to his son or his son's marriage; though, to be sure, I was only his lordship's secretary newly engaged, to whom he would not be likely to speak, even of so recent and striking an event. Still my impression now is that my lord was either glad of the separation or at least indifferent to it. He was not sorry or annoyed at anything of late date that I know."

"Perhaps he was opposed to the match," suggested the lady.

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"Don't know I'm sure. And now, mother dear, if you will have tea early so that I can take it with you, it would give me pleasure. I have to return to The Hill," said Roderick.

"Why, you are not going back to-night! I thought you were going to stay till to-morrow morning," said his mother, in a tone of disappointment.

"I am not my own man now, I told you that my lord acknowledged himself to be exacting, and so he is. I am obliged to make out a list of books to-night that my lord wishes me to consult and make extracts from early in the morning, and I shall have to be at the Capitol Library as soon as the doors are open to-morrow."

"What are these books?" inquired his mother.

"Oh, a lot of—of rubbish *I* call them. Cornelius Agrippa, Theophrastus, Paracelsus, and scores of others on the occult sciences, whose names my lord has at his tongue's end and whose volumes he wishes me to consult on the subject of dreams. I tell you my lord is cracked!"

Ruth sighed, She had risen, laid aside her work and commenced her simple preparations for tea.

The market garden and little dairy were very great conveniences to the poor lady, for from it at this season she could always get fresh vegetables and fruit, milk and butter at a low price to eke out her slender meals.

Now her table was spread with good bread and butter, cold ham, radishes, strawberries, and a pitcher of milk, besides the pot of fragrant young hyson tea.

As soon as the repast was over, Roderick got up to go.

"Good-bye, mother dear! I expect to spend the whole day in the Congressional Library. Fortunately it is only about ten minutes' walk from The Hill; but if I can get off in the evening I will come up to see you again. If I

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do not, why, do not expect me or be anxious about me."

And with this caution the young man embraced his mother and hurried from the house.

Ruth, being alone, ruminated on all she had heard. Was the lover, the husband of her youth so changed? Had the twenty years which had only matured her, so heavily aged him?

She had said only two days ago that she never wished to see him again. But now an irrepressible, great longing came over her to look on his face once more, if she could do so without making herself known to him or being recognized by him.

She began to consider whether this might be possible. It had been twice ten years since they had met, and these years had changed her much, though not for the worst as they had changed him.

From a slender, graceful girl of seventeen, with a thin oval face, and a clear, blooming complexion, she had developed into a tall, full-formed, majestic woman of thirty-seven, with a rich, creamy complexion, but no bloom, except in the rich carnation of her lips. Her very voice, which had then been clear and silvery, was now deep and melodious.

No, he would never recognize the bud in the full-blown rose; for even if a trace of resemblance to the girl remained in the woman, my lord's sight was failing and he would fail to detect it.

She ended by concluding that it would be quite possible for her to stand face to face with Lord John Daw without being recognized by him.

She thought that the next day, when Roderick would be absent in the Congressional Library, would give her the best chance of seeing his lordship alone.

She reflected what excuse she would make for calling

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on him. Suddenly she remembered the Strawberry Festival that was soon to come off at Christ's Church, for the benefit of the Sunday school, and that she herself had been intrusted with a number of tickets to sell, and she resolved to present herself to Lord John Daw as one of the agents for the sale of the Festival tickets. If he had not changed even more in *heart* than in mind and body, he would receive the visitor who should come on behalf of the Sunday-school, for he had always loved children and advocated their religious instruction.

Ruth made up her mind to try her experiment the very next morning, and then she sat down and worked hard at her darning to gain time for her venture.

Again it was three o'clock in the morning before she retired to bed, when she immediately fell asleep and slept profoundly for two hours, when she was aroused as usual by the ringing of the getting-up bell from the college over the way.

She arose quickly, hurried through her toilet and her breakfast and sat down to work "like a Turk" until it should be time to go to "The Hill."

At ten o'clock she arose, put on her black bonnet, thick Chantilly lace veil, a relic of her better days, her black China crape shawl and well-mended black kid gloves, locked up her house, and started to walk down to the hotel on Bridge street, from which the stage left every half hour for the Capitol Hill and the Navy Yard.

The journey cost a quarter of a dollar in those days, but Ruth paid it cheerfully, for now that her son had a lucrative situation she was no longer afraid of their being devoured by "the wolf at the door."

There were nine passengers in the stage, all strangers to Ruth, but their conversation attracted and interested her, for it was all about the mysterious events at the Wolf's Head Tavern on the Tuesday night when the just

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wedded pair were so suddenly and violently estranged and separated.

"The groom was the son of the real estate millionaire —that English nobleman, Lord John Daw ; but who was the bride? Can any one here tell?" inquired a short, thick-set, red-headed, and red-bearded man of his fellow-passengers.

"George! Don't you know? Why, she was Miss Eldiva Lisburne, daughter of that Colonel Lisburne who was killed in the battle of Bladensburg, and she was the niece of Mrs. Roslyn—the widow Roslyn who lives at Shadow Hall, that ghostly old house on Jersey Avenue, down by the river. There was a great wedding there on Tuesday, I hear," answered a pale young man with black hair and whiskers.

Ruth took in every word. If this was the truth that the man was telling, then her Roderick was mistaken, and the lost handkerchief that seemed to have borne so serious a part in the drama of the evening, and which bore in its corner the name of Eldiva, *had* been dropped by the bride, whose name *was* Eldiva, and not by the bridesmaid; as he had supposed.

And then a terrible thought occurred to her. Roderick might have been mistaken in another respect—he might have been mistaken in supposing the little dark-eyed beauty—whom he declared had dropped the handkerchief—to have been a bridesmaid, when she might have been the bride herself! If so, what a dreadful complication in Roderick's love dream!

Ruth Dunn was not one to suffer any suspense that she could end by a question. Turning to the ague-cheeked young man who had spoken last, she said :

"You know Miss Lisburne, then?"

"I knew her by sight, ma'am, but not to speak to," civilly replied the latter.

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"Will you be kind enough to tell me, then, what sort of looking young person Miss Lisburne was? I have a reason for asking which is not mere idle curiosity," Ruth explained.

"Certainly, ma'am. What sort of looking young person was she? Well, she was considered very beautiful by some men, but not by me, for I admire fair-complexioned and finely-formed ladies, and this Eldiva was small and very dark—a miniature Venus, I have heard her called."

"I thank you. Small, and dark, and beautiful; that is what you said, I believe?" inquired Ruth, to make assurance doubly sure.

"Yes, ma'am, small, and dark, and very beautiful in some men's eyes."

"Again, I thank you. Will you be kind enough to give that young lady's address? I ought to give you some explanation of my questions, however. The fact is, I—*we* have in our possession a small piece of property that was supposed to have been dropped by a lady answering to Miss Lisburne's description, and bearing the name of *Eldiva* marked upon it: and I—*we* wish to return the article."

"Well, ma'am, she lives at Shadow Hall, down on Jersey Avenue, near the river; but I hear that she has gone from there now, and some kinsfolks of hers have taken her down into the country for a change; and she needed it, poor young lady, I guess. But, however, the madam is at the Hall still, and you might send the—the pocketbook, or whatever it is you found, to her."

"Thank you," said Ruth, for the third time, and without thinking it worth while to set the young man right in regard to the "pocketbook."

"That was a dreadful thing that happened at the Wolf's Head, ma'am, particularly for the young lady, to

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be cast off and abandoned on the very evening of her wedding-day," said the stranger, apparently desirous of keeping up the conversation.

"Yes, but I know nothing of the circumstances beyond the fact that there was a sudden separation," answered Ruth, who, having learned all her fellow-passengers could tell her in regard to the identity of the bride, now wished to drop the subject.

"Nor nobody else, I guess, except the two themselves," remarked the young man.

And then silence fell between them, and lasted until the stage reached Delaware Avenue, north of the Capitol, where Ruth got out and inquired her way to The Hill, of the only person she saw—an old colored woman, in a sunbonnet, who was seated at a little table under the shade of a locust tree selling cakes and root beer.

The old aunty pointed up the avenue, and told the inquirer to take the turning to the left, "tow-*wards* the Bladensburg Road."

This avenue was but a broad, grass-grown road then, flanked on the north with a few old country houses with gardens and orchards around them, and an occasional modern building, such as the town house of old Lord Fairfax, which is still standing, though now occupied as a hotel: and on the south side by the Capitol grounds, which were then shaded by the gigantic forest trees that had been left standing when the park was first laid out.

Ruth hurried along the shady avenue, noting the natural hedges formed by the luxuriant growth of the eglantine, wild rose, blackberry, honeysuckle, maythorn and dogwood, all self-planted, and growing and entangling at their own sweet will, all along each side of the way. She took the indicated turning to the left, "tow-*wards* the Bladensburg Road," and soon saw the finest

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private dwelling in its grove of forest trees, on the top of the hill on her right.

She began to tremble as she approached the iron gates that finally admitted her into the heavily wooded grounds. She passed up a densely shaded walk to the front of the house, ascended the stone steps, and rapped timidly with the great brass knocker that adorned the strong mahogany double doors.

A gray-haired porter threw them open.

"Is Lord John Daw in?" timidly inquired Ruth.

"I'll see, mum," answered the old porter, beckoning a young footman, who approached and stood at attention.

"What name shall I send up to my lord, mum?" inquired the porter.

"'What name? I—it—it is of no consequence. Say that a lady has called to wait on my lord in behalf of the Protestant Episcopal Sunday School,' replied Ruth, in a hesitating and confused manner, for her agitation was increasing every moment.

"Thomas, go up and see if my lord is at home, and 'say that a lady has come to wait on his lordship in behalf of the Protestant 'Piscopal Sunday School,'" said the disgusted porter, daring to mimic the agitated visitor.

The more civil young footman touched his forehead to the lady, and went up stairs to take her message.

Ruth sank down on the nearest chair, for she was trembling so violently that she could scarcely stand.

The immediate prospect of meeting this man, who had been the lover of her youth, and whom she had innocently believed to be the husband of her life, was so overwhelming to her that she almost wished, now, to be reprieved from the trial, wished that word might be brought back to her that Lord John Daw was *not* at home.

But the footman soon returned, saying, respectfully:

"My lord will see you, ma'am. Please walk up."

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CHAPTER XII.

THAT VOICE!

Supreme was the effort of self-command with which Ruth Dunn composed herself, and arose to follow the footman to the inevitable meeting she had so rashly invoked.

He conducted her up that noble oak staircase, enriched with fine statuary on every landing, and on through a lofty upper hall, where walls of crimson hangings were adorned with costly oil paintings—artistic and faithful copies of the old masters—all of which had so excited the admiration of her rustic son, Roderick; and so on to the library on the right.

The footman opened the rosewood, and the crimson cloth doors, and announced:

"The lady from the Sunday-school, my lord," and retired.

Ruth advanced slowly and timidly up the long room, from some obscure corner of which an old gentleman, with a rotund form, wrapped in a black silk dressing-gown, a round, silver-gray head, and a fresh, clean shaven face, arose and came forward to meet her; for Lord John, with all his eccentricity and irritability, was courteous to women, except when they crossed his hobbies.

"How do you do, ma'am? Take this easy-chair by the window. It is cool here;—and tell me what I can have the pleasure of doing for your Sunday-school," he said, with a slight wave of his delicate hand towards a luxurious seat at the lofty window, between his writing-desk and the full length likeness of his son.

"I thank you, my lord," said Ruth, trembling excessively, as she seated herself and drew the chair around

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so that her back was to the lighted window and her face in the deep shadow.

"I have always been interested in Sunday-schools, ma'am, and shall be glad to do what I can," said the old gentleman, preceiving that his visitor seemed embarrassed and inclined to hesitate.

"I have heard so, my lord, and have, therefore, ventured to call upon you," said Ruth, in a low voice, at the sound of which the old gentleman turned his head to listen, with a look of slight surprise and pleasure, for though Ruth spoke so low, her tones were full, rich and sweet, a luxury of sound to a musical ear.

Ruth drew from her black velvet reticule a packet of tickets, while the old lord took from his drawer a check-book.

"If you will kindly buy a few of these tickets to distribute among your friends' children," said Ruth laying the packet before him.

Again the old lord paused in the act of opening his check-book to listen to the melody of the voice that fascinated him.

Was it only the melody, or was it some old, familiar, half-forgotten cadence so

"The electric chord with which we are darkly bound?"

He did not know, perhaps, and he spoke:

"I am not a charitable man, Mrs.—Mrs.—"

He paused, but she did not help him to her name. She only bowed and he resumed:

"I am not a charitable man, and do not wish to be called or considered so—especially in regard to grown-up people; but children are innocent little sinners, and I will do what I can to keep them from becoming guilty ones."

While he spoke he was signing a check, and Ruth noticed, with a pang of pity, how low he bent and how

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closely he peered at his work, and how crooked the letters were when he handed her the paper.

"I thank you, my lord—I thank you very much," she said, on receiving it; then glancing at the check and seeing it was for fifty dollars she flushed slightly and handed it back, saying: "Excuse me, my lord, but I have no more than five dollars' worth of tickets with me."

Once more the old gentleman leaned, with a strange interest, to drink in the melody of that voice before he answered.

"I know! I know! Keep the tickets, my dear lady, or distribute them among poor children who are unable to buy, and keep the check. It is but a trifle towards your library, or whatever it is you are getting for the Sunday-school."

"You are very, very good, my lord, and this, indeed, will be a great help. I thank you very much," said Ruth, rising to go.

"A trifle—nothing. I should really like to have you stay longer—and—talk to me—about—the Sunday-schools. I am expecting my secretary here on very important business. We are to go over, together, the works of the great Van Helmont, which he is to fetch me from the Congressional Library. I *wish* you would remain until he comes," urged the old gentleman, with much more than usual hospitality.

"Oh, pray excuse me, my lord, I—should be honored—and pleased to stay longer: but—I am indeed very much pressed with work to-day, and must bid your lordship good-day, with many thanks," said Ruth, as she bowed and turned away.

The old gentleman arose and walked down the room by her side until they reached the inner crimson doors.

As he opened them for her, he said:

"When and where is that Sunday-school festival to be

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held? I think I shall attend it. I *like* Sunday-school festivals. You will be there on duty, of course?"

"If nothing should prevent me, my lord."

"Then I will certainly go. For I want to hear you talk—about the cause. Where, and—what day, did you say the festival was to be held?"

"Here is a ticket, my lord, which will give you all necessary information. Good morning, and many thanks," said Ruth, as she handed the passport, bowed, and went out.

"*Who is she?*" ruminated the old man, as he went slowly back to his seat—"*Who is she?* and why does her voice affect me so? Ah, if I could only have *her* for my amanuensis and secretary! If I could listen to *her* voice every day of my life, what a comfort it would be to me. But that would never do—never do! No, no, it is not to be thought of! The world would have its false and ill-natured comments to make! Yet, how strange and restorative that woman's presence is to me! What can be the reason? I see! Oh, I see! She is the incarnation of that vague woman of my dream! Heigh-ho!"

He stood leaning on his desk for a while, and then, instead of sitting, he walked slowly up and down the long room.

"Heigh-ho!" he sighed. "I am very lonely in my old age—very lonely—especially now that John has taken himself off to Canada to escape the eyes and tongues of his friends and acquaintances, and to forget his disreputable marriage. But he will never forget it until it is dissolved by law. And it must be dissolved! John will be the heir of his uncle's dukedom, and he must marry again to keep up the family title."

So, branching off to other subjects, the old lord finally sank into his elbow-chair to await the arrival of his secretary.

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In the meantime Ruth Dunn, drawing her vail closely over her face, descended the long staircase, which was then shrouded in semi-darkness, not only from the dim obscurity of the stained glass windows, but from the pressure against them of the heavily foliaged old forest trees around the outside of the house.

Ruth kept her hand on the heavy balustrades as she descended.

When about half way down she heard some one toiling up the stairs.

She feared it might be her son, Roderick, the secretary, whom my lord was momentarily expecting.

She pressed herself closely against the balustrades, and drew her vail farther over her face to keep it out of sight of the new-comer.

In another moment he reached her, stared at her for an instant, and passed on up stairs.

"Thank Heaven it is not Roderick!" she said, as in her turn she stared after the man, a hump-backed cripple, who wore his black hair and beard long, like a German artist, and who limped as he walked.

Ruth was moved by a woman's curiosity to ask the hall footman at the bottom of the stairs:

"Who is that"—she hesitated whether to say man or gentleman, and finally she said—"person who has just gone up stairs!"

"My lord's secretary, ma'am," added the servant.

"Oh, no, I do not mean his lordship's secretary. I did not see *him*. I mean a dark man with black hair and beard and a humpback, who limps as he walks," Ruth explained.

"That's him, ma'am! That's my lord's new secretary," replied the footman.

"Has my lord got two secretaries, then?" inquired Mrs. Dunn.

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"Bless you, no, mum! He never had any until yesterday his lordship engaged this gentleman."

"I think you are mistaken," said the mystified lady. "I happen to know Lord John Daw's secretary, and he is a totally different looking man from this person."

"Don't like to contradict a lady, mum, but this dark-complected, humpbacked party is my lord's new secretary as he engaged no longer ago then yesterday."

"Then what is this man's name?"

"Let me see—what *is* it again?—Hunt! Yes, that is it. Hunt, ma'am—Professor Hunt!"

"If you are right, I have been greatly mistaken," said Ruth; and then, at length, feeling that it was scarcely proper conduct for her to stand there questioning and cross-questioning the servant of Lord John Daw, she passed on her way to the front doors.

The footman darted before her, opened them, and Ruth Dunn left the house.

She went down the heavily-shaded walk and passed the great iron gates; but she did not go towards the stage stand.

She wanted to reach some secluded spot where she could relieve her overburdened heart with a good cry.

She crossed over to the Capitol grounds, entered by the north gate, and sought the shelter of a dark grove at the northeast corner.

Here she dropped down into the tall, deep grass and gave herself up to a paroxysm of tears and sobs.

She had seen him again—the lover of her youth. She had seen him again after twenty years, and oh, how changed, how old, gray, worn, and infirm he looked! She felt that she loved him still, and pitied him with a tenderness that nearly broke her heart.

Had she been too proud, hard, and cruel in banishing him so utterly out of her life that he was left to a dreary

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solitude, an empty desert, in which both mind and body had weakened and aged? Might she not have allowed a sisterly and brotherly friendship and association to have been continued between them? Might she not, at least, have permitted a correspondence by letter? Would not either plan have been better than this utter, deadly estrangement?

She put these questions to herself now that it was too late to answer them.

And what must be her future relations to this prematurely aged and broken man?

Her interview with him had been full of unspoken pathos. His dim eyes had not seen her features clearly, his dull ears had to bend to catch her words. His weakened senses had not recognized her, yet—"the pity of it!"—his *soul* had divined her, his soul called for her!

What could she do for him! If it could only be right, she would go and keep house for him, nurse him, take care of him, and make him as happy as she could, just as if she were his daughter, and she would ask no remembrance of the past, and no recognition in the present. If this could only be right!

In the meantime, one course was clearly right—that her son Roderick should do all that lay in *his* way to render happy this dreary old man.

Her fit of weeping had relieved her, and she arose to walk towards the corner of the avenue, where she was to wait for the stage.

As she drew near the north gate she saw the yellow coach coming up the hill from the West, and she hurried to be in time to meet it.

A few minutes more and she was seated alone, the only passenger in the vehicle, being swiftly drawn towards Georgetown.

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Two subjects, besides the recent meeting with Lord John Daw, occupied her thoughts.

One was the identity of Lord John Daw's new secretary. Was the dark, hunchbacked man in green spectacles that secretary, as the footman, who ought to know, declared him to be? And if so, where was her son Roderick, and what was his office about the house? And if there were two secretaries, why had he not told her! It was all a mystery!

The other was the identity of young John Daw's forsaken bride. Was *she* the "Eldiva" with whom Roderick had ignorantly fallen in love, whom he had mistaken for one of the bridesmaids, and whose handkerchief he had found and kept for a memorial? If so, the young man's dream was sinful and his case was hopeless.

Ah! upon the whole, Ruth Dunn's morning's adventure had not contributed to her peace of mind.

There was indeed but one pleasant item in the day's doings, and that was the check for fifty dollars, which she should have the pleasure of presenting to the treasurer of the church for the benefit of the Sunday-school library.

It was late in the afternoon when Ruth Dunn reached home. She hastily laid off her bonnet and shawl and made a cup of tea, which she took with a slice of bread, to keep body and soul together, until she could finish her week's task.

Then she sat down and worked diligently until sunset, when she set the last stitch, hurriedly made up the parcel, threw on her bonnet, and took it over to the old porter at the college gate.

When she had received her pay, she went down to the market to buy a Sunday's dinner, for she knew her son would be off duty on the Sabbath and would spend the day with her.

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She scarcely expected him home that night, yet she sat up late, waiting lest he should come.

At length, feeling sure that she should see him in the morning, she went to bed and slept off the fatigue of the last two days and nights.

The next morning, just as she had finished dressing, Roderick entered the room, saying quietly:

"My lord kept me at Van Helmont and his mysticism until twelve o'clock last night; he would have kept me longer had it been any other night than Saturday; being a strict churchman, he would not let me break the Sabbath day by working after twelve o'clock; but, at all events, he kept me too long to make it possible for me to return to you. How are you, mother dear? You look pale and tired this morning."

"I am well; a little tired, but the Sabbath rest will restore me, Roderick. I am glad you came so early as to take breakfast with me."

"I was resolved to do it, mother, dear. I was up at sunrise this morning, and walked all the way from the Capitol Hill here; and the tramp through the morning air has given me a sharp appetite."

"Come to breakfast, then. Here is some fine coffee and fresh cream from Mrs. Brown, and some nice rolls and butter, and a chicken cooked yesterday."

They sat down to the table, and as Ruth handed her son his cup of coffee she inquired:

"Is there another secretary or amanuensis in the employment of Lord John Daw?"

"Why, no, mother of course not. I am the only one. Why should you suppose there was another?" inquired the young man, in some surprise.

"I—should think if my lord's literary work is so heavy as to keep one amanuensis up until twelve o'clock every night, that his lordship ought to have two—that is all,"

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said Ruth, with a twinge of conscience at the prevariation.

Roderick laughed and replied :

"But he could not dictate to two at the same time, dear mother."

"No, of course not," murmured Ruth.

Then she thought of the other puzzle, and said :

"By the way, my dear Roderick, you should really see about returning that handkerchief which is in your possession."

"Oh, I am going to return it," replied the young man, drawing the bit of cambric and lace from his breast pocket and throwing it carelessly upon the bureau. "It is not my dark-eyed angel's handkerchief, after all. Nor is her name Eldiva. Here have I been cherishing and kissing a bauble that belongs not to her, but to that blue-eyed Juno of a bride."

"But how do you know this, Roderick?" inquired Ruth, who was perplexed by his half knowledge with its consequent mistake.

"By the simplest means. I took up the *Intelligencer* and read the marriage notice—where the name of the bride was set down as Eldiva, only daughter of the late Colonel Lisburne."

"But how do you know that Eldiva, the bride, was *not* the little dark-eyed beauty who dropped the handkerchief that bears her name?"

"Oh, mother, because the bride was pointed out to me by one of the waiters. The bride was a tall queenly blonde."

"Roderick, my dear, that waiter was mistaken. The bride, Eldiva, *was* that little, dark-eyed beauty who dropped the handkerchief you picked up," said Ruth; and then she was frightened by the effect of her words upon the young man.

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He stared at her in horror a moment, and then exclaimed:

"Mother! Mother! Oh, for Heaven's sake, don't say so! Don't! It cannot be true!"

"My dear Roderick, it is true. I know it for a positive fact, which it is my duty to impress on you, and I trust my son, that you have honor and firmness enough to conquer a passion which you know would be sinful to cherish," gravely replied the lady.

"Oh, mother, it is not that. It is not that! It is not my disappointment! But, oh, it is too horrible, too horrible! That *she* should be the abandoned bride of John Daw! Mother, *how* do you know this?" he demanded.

"My dear, I had occasion to go down in the stage to the city yesterday and met a neighbor who knew Eldiva Lisburne by sight, and described her as small, dark, and beautiful; and further stated that when she met with the misadventure that caused her sudden separation from her husband, she was in search of that handkerchief she had dropped."

"Great Heaven! I see it all now! And I wish, oh! I wish that I had dropped dead at the door before I ever entered the Wolf's Head?"

"Roderick! Roderick! what *do* you mean?" exclaimed his mother in alarm.

But the young men had risen and pushed back his chair, and now he said:

"Let me go away for a little while."

And he withdrew to his own den at the head of the stairs.

Ruth did not follow him. She was in great trouble, but she went mechanically about her household duties, cleared up the table and prepared herself for church.

By the time she was ready Roderick re-entered the room, pale, but calm and firm.

She looked at him anxiously.

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"Mother," he said, in reply to her mute questioning—"mother never mention her name again. Let the subject drop forever."

"I will do so, Roderick," she answered.

And he took his hat and walked with her to church.

CHAPTER XIII.

CHANGES AT SHADOW HALL.

Meanwhile the mystery of the broken marriage remained unsolved at Shadow Hall.

Old Mr. Jubal Wells was as silent as the sphinx and as obstinate as a mule before the persistent questionings of Zora Roslyn.

"'Be innocent of the knowledge, dearest chuck,'" he would quote in answer to the widow's importunities.

"'Where ignorance is bliss 'tis folly to be wise,'" or else:

"'It is best to let sleeping dogs lie.'"

"How intolerably provoking! Is this separation likely to be a lasting one?" said Zora.

"It is a final one, yes."

"Is there ground for divorce? Will Mr. John Daw seek the legal dissolution of his marriage?"

"I don't know how the courts of law might construe the event that caused the separation. But the question will never be raised. Mr. John Daw told me that though a deep disaster had obliged him to repudiate his bride, yet he loved her still, too dearly to hurt her in any manner; that therefore he should never draw public attention towards her by seeking for a divorce."

"WILL you tell me 'the cause, the cause, my soul?'" implored Zora Roslyn, with clasped hands.

"No, I will not, my dear. I cannot. I am under sol-

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emn promise to Mr. John Daw never to tell any one. He told me the facts under the seal of secrecy, and he *only* told me that he might render some satisfactory explanation to *me*, as the young lady's guardian, for his apparently causeless and cruel desertion of her," concluded old Jubal Wells, as he lighted his pipe and walked out into the garden.

Zora Roslyn went up stairs to that pleasant front chamber now occupied by Eldiva.

The forsaken bride was reclining in an arm-chair by one of the windows. She wore a white wrapper, and her long black hair was unbound and flowing over her shoulders. She was very pale and quiet, and her fingers were engaged in the lace-making that was then as popular as crochet is now.

Mrs. Roslyn drew a chair and seated herself beside Eldiva and said :

" Diva, dearest, I have come once more to *implore* you to tell me your secret—you know what I mean."

The girl laid down her lace frame on her lap and exclaimed :

" Aunt Zoe ! if you have any mercy in your heart, any pity for my woe, never repeat that question ! I *cannot* answer it."

" But if you do not tell me your secret, how can I ever learn how to comfort you, my dear ?" tenderly inquired the lady.

" You cannot comfort me. No one could under the circumstances," replied the girl in a tone of quiet despair.

Mrs. Roslyn groaned.

" Uncle and Aunt Wells have invited me to go down and spend the summer with them at Bloomfield," said Eldiva.

" Yes, I know ; they mentioned the matter to me. They want us all to go," replied Mrs. Roslyn.

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"I think I shall do so. I wish to get away from this place and never to see or hear of it again," murmured Eldiva.

"Then I think we had better go for a little while. Afterwards, perhaps you may feel like returning with me. And you know, Diva, darling, 'while there is life there is hope.'"

"Not for me! Oh, not for me! My only hope is beyond this life!" sighed the girl.

"Do not speak so despondently, my poor dear! Oh, how I wish I knew what was the cause of all this!"

Mrs. Roslyn left the room to set about her preparations for going to Bloomfield.

In going down the front stairs she saw that the street door was open and that Lance sat out on the front porch with Nea on his lap. His arm was around the child's waist, hers around his neck, and he held in his hand a Primary Geography, from which he was orally teaching her the first lesson—namely that the earth was round and divided into land and water.

Mrs. Roslyn came out and spoke to the young midshipman.

"Lance, we are all going down to St. Mary's county to spend the summer with Uncle Jubal and Aunt Joyce. Would you like to go?"

"Why, of course I would! I haven't been down the country since—let me see! since I was eight years old! We'll have jolly times there, won't we Nea? I'll show you where the mountain cherries grow!"

"Mamma!" said Nea, Lance tells me that I certainly *do* see better than I did when he went away three years ago."

"Oh, Lance, my dear, do you really think so?" eagerly inquired the child's mother.

"I am quite sure of it, mamma. I remember well

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enough—oh! don't I?—just how little she could see when I went away!—only just the sunrise and the sunset, and only as a dim fire on the horizon."

"And now, Lance, how much better—can she see now? What can she see now?"

"Why, large, solid objects!"

"Heaven grant that this improvement may go on to perfect restoration of her sight," fervently prayed the mother.

"I think, from what Dr. Hamilton said from the beginning, that it will be so, if we take the best care of her health; and that in a year or so she may be as well as any one. What do you think of that, Nea?" inquired Lance, caressing the blind child.

"Oh! I shall love to see! I shall love to see! To see you, Lance!" she answered, putting up her hand and passing it fondly over his face.

"You must attend to getting your things together, Lance, and if you have anything to be washed, give them out at once."

"When do we leave?"

"On Tuesday morning, I think," said Mrs. Roslyn, as she went into the house

The day was a busy one, for Zora Roslyn stirred up and drove every one with their preparations in a way that was wonderful with her indolent and easy-going nature.

Mr. Jubal Wells went to negotiate with Captain Miles Tawney, of the *Kitty*, and succeeded in effecting an arrangement by which the whole of the little cabin was engaged for a party of nine ladies and gentlemen, with their servants.

Shadow Hall was to be left in the possession of Old Uncle Biggs and Aunt Apple.

On Tuesday morning quite a gay procession set forth

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from the old hall for Coombes's Wharf, which was at the foot of the same avenue, and where the *Kitty* lay.

The voyagers were standing on deck, when the boy, Gad, from Shadow Hall, came running down to the wharf, gesticulating wildly, with a letter that he shook above his head.

Lance ran across the gang plank to meet him.

"What is it, Gad?"

"A letter wot Marse Letter Carrier Schofiel' fotch to de house little w'ile ago."

Lance looked at the superscription of the letter. "*Mrs. John Daw*," started, hurried on deck, and handed it to his cousin, saying:

"It is for you."

"Who is it from, Eldiva? Oh I see; it is a drop letter. Is it from Imperia North?" inquired Mrs. Roslyn, bending over the girl's shoulder to scrutinize the handwriting.

"No, it is from—my—from Mr. John Daw," breathed the forsaken bride, in an almost expiring voice.

"From him!" exclaimed Mrs. Roslyn. "Well!"

CHAPTER XIV.

THE LETTER—THE SUMMONS.

"Yes, this letter—is from—Mr. John Daw," repeated the deserted bride, in a vacant, faltering, mechanical voice, as she gazed at the handwriting on the envelope.

"Let me take you down to the cabin, my love," whispered Mrs. Roslyn, fearing that her niece was about to faint under excess of emotion.

And she drew the arm of the girl within her own and led her off, crowding along between piles of bales, boxes

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and barrels, that still lumbered the little deck, and thence down the companion-way that led into the little, dark cabin, and placed her in one of the two arm-chairs.

Eldiva sank down in the chair to which her aunt had led her, and held her letter unopened in her lap.

"Why don't you read it?" inquired Mrs. Roslyn, who was consumed with curiosity.

"For now," she thought to herself, "I shall certainly find out why he ran away from her on the wedding night."

"Aunt Zora, would you kindly leave me here for a few moments? I must be alone when I open this letter," said Eldiva, in a deprecating tone.

"Well, of all requests in the world I think that is the strangest! Of course I will go, if you wish me to do so," replied the lady, with a look of pique, as she left the cabin.

Still, when left alone, poor Eldiva held the letter unopened for a while, as if she feared to read it. Then with a low-breathed:

"Heaven have pity on me!" she broke the seal, her fast flowing tears dimming her vision and blotting the paper as she tried to read the wild, illegible, incoherent outpouring of anguish that follows:

THE HILL, May 10, 18—.

MY BELOVED ELDIVA: For — notwithstanding the thunderbolt of malignant fate that was hurled upon us on our wedding day, riving us asunder forever and ever—you are still my beloved Eldiva, yes, the best beloved of all the world to me!—how much beloved, the solitude to which I doom my whole future life, the extinction to which I doom the ancient, historic house and title of which I am the latest representative and heir—will prove.

For though we must never meet again, face to face, in this lower world, or at least not until one or the other of

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us shall come to his or to her death-bed, yet I shall never seek a legal dissolution of our marriage, and therefore never give a successor either to my hand or heart.

"My life must linger on alone."

In our last brief, stormy interview, on that fatal night which reft us asunder, I was harsh, cruel, and most unjust to you—to you, poor heart, who were suffering agonies more acute, if possible, than those which rent my own soul. But, Eldiva, I was mad, frantic, infuriated by pain, rage, and despair. The lion suddenly reft of his mate could be no less irresponsible for his raging fury than was I for my words and actions in that maddening hour! Yet now the remembrance of them raises pain to agony. I do not mean to excuse myself. I do not dare to ask your pardon. I only wish to retract every bitter word uttered in my frenzy and to declare that I hold you guiltless, blameless, in that calamity—that I believe, *know* you to be as innocent as a child, immaculate as an angel.

The cause of our separation has never passed my lips, except to your guardian, Mr. Jubal Wells, to whom the explanation was positively due and from whom it could not properly be withheld. But before imparting the secret to him, I bound him by oath never to reveal it.

He never will, I feel sure, nor will I ever do so while I live. The cause of our sudden separation is the affair of ourselves alone. The world has nothing whatever to do with it; or if it thinks it has, let it cast its reproach upon me alone, the son of "the mad lord," who has inherited some of his father's eccentricities, if not his insanity.

Reproach shall not touch you, my still dearest one. I have caused our marriage notice to be inserted in all the papers. The marriage settlement made upon you must now be doubled. You must continue to bear my name, and when, in due course of time, I shall come into the family honors, you must wear my title.

In the meanwhile, if during your mortal life I should be brought near death—an event most likely to happen—I shall surely summon you, and I pray you then to come to me.

If, on the other hand, it be ordained that during my

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lifetime *you* should be brought face to face with the last great change—which may Heaven forbid—I pray you then to send for me, and I will surely go to you.

Though we can never meet in life, we must meet in death.

And now let me beg you to answer this letter. I implore you, Eldiva, to write to me. I long, I hunger to hear from you: for, though the fate which has severed us forbids that we should ever clasp hands again in this world yet I am, and must always continue, your devoted though most unhappy lover and husband. JOHN DAW.

"Good, noble, generous heart!" sobbed the forsaken bride, as she finished this letter and pressed it to her lips.

She covered the paper with kisses, bedewed it with tears, and then put it in her bosom next to her heart. Then covering her face with her hands, she sank back in her chair to reflect.

In her deep pre-occupation she had not noticed that the schooner was in motion, for that motion was, as yet, smooth enough.

Her reflections were interrupted by the re-entrance of Mrs. Roslyn, whose mind was too much excited by curiosity to allow her to keep quiet for any length of time.

"Well, you have had ample opportunity to read your letter. Will you tell me now, as to one who is interested in your welfare, what effect that letter is likely to have on your future destiny? Does Mr. John Daw propose a reconciliation or—a repudiation?" she inquired, as she seated herself in one of the rocking-chairs.

"You may read the letter for yourself, Aunt Zora," said the girl, taking it from her bosom and handing it to the lady.

"Oh, thank you, Eldiva. This is, at length, as it should be. You ought not to have any secrets from me, you know. There is no one in the world more solicitous for

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your good than I am," said Mrs. Roslyn, as she opened the letter and commenced to read, thinking to herself, "Now I shall certainly come to the bottom of the mystery."

Great was Mrs. Roslyn's disappointment. The letter revealed nothing of the "mystery," and all her efforts to extract information on the subject from Eldiva were futile.

Kitty was going down the river with the tide, but there was a fresh head wind that grew stronger, so that the vessel had to tack from side to side, and the progress was so slow that it was near noon when she reached Alexandria's crowded little port.

As the *Kitty* was to remain here several hours to take on freight for Charlotte Hall, and the neighborhood of the wharf was intolerably hot and ill-flavored, our whole party left the vessel and went to the old Royal George Tavern, on King street.

The voyagers dined at the Royal George, and after dinner all, with the exception of Eldiva, took a walk around the old town to call on various acquaintances.

Eldiva called for writing materials, and established herself at a table in the corner of the then unoccupied "ladies' parlor," and drew forth her lost bridegroom's letter for the purpose of reading it over once more, and then answering it in time for the evening's mail.

Her letter was unconventional in all respects, undignified, considering the circumstances, discreet to the last degree, as any of her friends would have said; yet it was the true, natural, impulsive outpouring of her heart.

ROYAL GEORGE INN, Alexandria, Va.,
May 15, 18—.

MY ADORED HUSBAND:—Since you will still let me call you so, your merciful letter was handed me after our departure thence, and it was brought to me by Gad, who ran all the way from the house to the wharf to give it to

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me before the schooner should sail. I wish that it had reached me an hour earlier that I might have answered it as quickly as I ought to have done, but I am very thankful that I did not altogether miss the joy of getting it.

Oh! you do not know the comfort this dear letter has brought me!—the only ray of comfort that has reached my soul since the awful night of our severance.

To know that you do not blame me—to feel that you still love me, is the sweetest consolation I can carry into my sorrowful banishment and life-long widowhood!

And, dear heart! do not so bitterly reproach yourself for "the frenzy of that maddening hour," as you justly term it. Had you loved me less, you would have been less wrought up by the catastrophe which clove us asunder.

I have never been offended with you for one moment, never even been displeased with you; only heart-broken and agonized until your dear letter came like a healing balm for the bleeding wounds.

Now, I can bear it.

But, dearest soul! do not let the thought of our lost dream ruin your real life. Our marriage was a mere ceremony, not a reality, a hope, not a fact; so there can be no moral or religious grounds why you should not relieve yourself of bonds which, if suffered to bind, must keep you from all family ties, all domestic joy.

Oh, it is hard! it is bitter! it is exceeding bitter to be obliged to write this, but—IT IS JUST—that since we two can never meet again in this world, until the supreme hour which must take one of us away from it,—IT IS JUST that you should not sacrifice your own prospects and your father's ambitions, by the life of celibacy to which you say you have sentenced yourself. IT IS JUST that you should release yourself from the nominal bonds that bind you to me, and find in another and a better union the domestic happiness that should be yours.

Nor, dearest heart! do not let any thought of my future trouble you. If I have not found happiness in this sad world, I can find peace and hope in looking to another and better one. But while I remain here, and as long as you let me call myself so, I am, your devoted wife,

ELDIVA DAW.

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She folded, sealed, and directed this letter, and went out and posted it with her own hand to insure its safe dispatch.

When she returned to the tavern she found her companions had come in from their walk, and were waiting tea for her.

"We ordered it early so as to get back to the schooner, which is to sail with the outgoing tide at sunset," Mr. Wells explained.

Immediately after tea the party set out for the wharf, and were soon all snugly on board the *Kitty*, who sailed out of the little port a few minutes after the sun had sunk out of sight behind the distant Virginia hills.

The *Kitty* had a rather rough passage down the river and bay; but at sunrise, on the fifth day of the voyage, she landed her passengers safely.

The sick and weary voyagers went first to the George Washington Tavern to rest and recover from their tossings and nausea before commencing their short land journey to Bloomfield.

A day and night sufficed to recuperate them all, and on the second morning they entered the carriages and wagons that had been sent from the farm to meet them, and set off in procession, by the pleasant road through Neale's Forest to Bloomfield, where they arrived in time for an early tea.

Bloomfield Farm was situated in a deep green basin, surrounded by thickly wooded hills.

A rocky brook ran through it.

The house was a large, roomy, but plain frame building, with white walls, green window shutters, and piazza running all around it from the ground floor to the garret, wreathed with climbing roses, clematis, and honeysuckle, shaded with flowering locust trees, and encom-

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passed with verdant lawns, blooming gardens and fruitful orchards.

To this pleasant farm-house our travellers came at the close of a beautiful spring day.

It seemed to greet them as a haven of rest.

Old Mr. and Mrs. Wells at once took upon themselves the cheerful duties of host and hostess, and showed their guests in person to their apartments—Mr. Wells attending the gentlemen and Mrs. Wells the ladies.

The bed-chambers were all pleasant, white-draped rooms on the upper floors, with doors and windows opening upon the rose and vine-shaded piazzas.

Into one of these "bowers" Eldiva was introduced by Avonia Sothoron.

She was closely followed by little Nea, whose pathetic sympathy had so touched the heart of the discarded bride that she had requested that the child might be allowed to share her room.

Eldiva's large travelling trunk stood in the middle of the room, with Nerissa's little box beside it.

After tea, while the servants were clearing away the table, the company broke up into pairs and trios and strolled about the lawn, enjoying the coolness of the evening, the fragrance of the acacia blossoms, and the soft radiance of the moonlight, until it was time to withdraw into the house and retire to bed.

Eldiva, as she laid her head upon her pillow that night, felt more at peace with herself, life, and the Lord, than she had been since that fatal night at the Wolf's Head, when she had enjoyed the highest happiness and suffered the deepest misery that, perhaps, had ever been experienced by any human being. With little Nea at her side she fell asleep in serenity.

The next morning a happy party gathered around the

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breakfast table, which was set out in the grove on the lawn.

Even Eldiva's spirits rose and she was cheerful; for, unless sin or death overshadow the soul and so darken the scene, there is no resisting the cheering influences of nature in her summer joy—the delicious greenness and freshness of the foliage dancing in the breeze and shining in the light, the brightness and fragrance of the flowers, the gleeful chirp of insects, the rapturous songs of birds —all teaching the pleasant lesson of grateful enjoyment.

Life was delightful at Bloomfield Farm.

The family and friends had scarcely got settled when the country neighbors, with their hospitality, began to call and to give invitations to the incomparable social teas of that neighborhood.

At first Eldiva shrank from meeting any of her old associates.

But Mrs. Roslyn persuaded her to nerve herself to the effort, and receive visits and accept invitations.

Sometimes one or another would congratulate the newly-married young lady, and innocently inquire after Mr. Daw, to be told that he was still in Washington, and to infer that he was detained there by business; for the news of the Wolf's Head calamity had not yet travelled down to Bloomfield, nor were the people thereabout much given to evil thinking or evil speaking.

"They, too, shepherds in Arcadia dwelt."

Eldiva received no other letter from her absent and eccentric husband, yet, being at peace with him though separated from him, she was, to use her own words, "resigned if not happy."

And so the pleasant summers in the country went on, until, from the clear sky upon that cheerful life, fell a thunderbolt in the form of a sudden summons.

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It was a fine morning in September, and the family were at breakfast in the grove on the lawn, and Mr. Jubal Wells had just said that they must make the most of the pleasant mornings that remained to them, for that it would soon be getting too chilly to breakfast in the open air, when a horseman rode at full gallop into the lawn and drew rein at the horse-block.

"Why—it is Richard Daly, Lord John Daw's land-agent!" exclaimed Mrs. Roslyn, in surprise, as the new-comer dismounted, threw his bridle to a negro boy who had run to take it, and approached the breakfasting party.

Mr. Wells arose and went to meet the visitor.

"I am looking for the master of the house," said Daly.

"He is here at your service, sir; what can he do for you?" replied the polite old gentleman.

"You are Mr. Jubal Wells, then?"

"Mr. Jubal Wells."

"And I, Richard Daly," said the visitor, lifting his hat.

"I am glad to see you, Mr. Daly. We are just at breakfast. Will you join us?"

"No, I thank you, sir. I have breakfasted. Can you give me a moment's private conversation *now*? The case is imminent or I would not ask it."

"Certainly, sir. Come with me, if you please," said Mr. Wells, leading the way to the house.

The piazza was unoccupied, and the old gentleman invited his visitor to sit down there.

"I came from Lord John Daw—" began Daly, and then he paused.

"I hope his lordship is well," said the host, politely.

"He is as well as he can hope to be, under adverse circumstances," said Daly, hesitating.

"I trust you bring no bad news," observed the old gentleman.

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"Bad news need never surprise any one," sagely remarked the visitor.

"It seems to me, Mr. Daly, that you are trying to prepare me for ill tidings. What are they?" inquired Mr. Wells, controlling the anxiety that began to disturb him.

"I left Washington yesterday morning. I have ridden day and night, changing horses at every post, to bring my message."

"Which proves its great importance, of course. Let us have it at once," said Mr. Wells, little thinking what the message was to be.

"Mr. John Daw—dying! sighed Daly, solemnly.

"Great ——! Mr. John Daw—dying! That young fellow! Impossible!" exclaimed the old man.

"There, I have shocked you! I thought I should, though I tried to prepare you," said Daly, regretfully.

"You have shocked me! Greatly shocked me! But I can scarcely believe it! *Can* it be possible?"

"It is unhappily too true."

"Dear me! dear me! dear me! Who shall tell his wife?" exclaimed the old gentleman.

"Ah!" sighed Daly.

"Dying! John Daw! That young fellow! What is his disease?" inquired the old gentleman.

"He really does not seem to have any."

"What is he dying of, then?" impatiently demanded Mr. Wells.

"Dr. Hamilton calls it nervous exhaustion, the result of great mental distress from the misunderstanding with his wife. And, sir, he wishes to see her before he dies."

"Dear me! dear me! dear me! But if his low condition is the effect of his distress at his estrangement from his wife the sight of her may—eh?—restore him?"

"The presence of the lady will comfort him, sir, at all

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events. His restoration, I fear, is beyond human skill or hope. Let me beg you to break this sad news to Mrs. John Daw, for I have been sent to escort her back to Washington."

"Ah! dear me! who has commissioned you Mr. Daly?"

"Lord John Daw, at the urgent request of his dying son. Here sir, is a letter that I had nearly forgotten to present," said Daly, pulling a large, folded paper, with a great red seal, from his pocket.

It was but a short note from Lord John Daw to Mr. Wells, and read as follows:

THE HILL, Washington, May 18.

TO JUBAL WELLS, ESQ.,—*My Dear Sir*:—This will be handed to you by my agent, Mr. Richard Daly. I am sorry to inform you of the extreme illness of my son, who urgently desires to see his wife. Mr. Daly will attend the lady to Washington if she will do us the favor to come, and to accept his escort. Permit me to advise that no time should be lost, as the danger of a fatal termination to this illness is imminent. With regards to your family, I am, respectfully yours, JOHN DAW.

"These lines are your credentials! Mr. Daly, I will go and prepare my niece, and while she is making arrangements for her journey, I beg you to come in and rest and refresh yourself. When do you wish to start for the city?"

"This very morning, if possible, and just as soon as the young lady can get ready."

"Very well! I will see to the details of your journey. You must have our light carriage and change horses at every post. I do not think I shall let you go, however, under two hours. Go in and refresh yourself! Call for whatever you need. Here, Gideon!"—the old man broke off to beckon a colored servant from the neighborhood of the breakfast-table—"Show this gentleman to a spare room, and remain at his orders."

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The darkie approached, bowing obsequiously, and Richard Daly arose and followed him into the house.

Then Mr. Wells, with a deep sigh, went to the breakfast-table, where the family party were anxiously waiting to hear what business had brought Lord John Daw's land agent to the farm.

"Excuse me, dear friends. I will satisfy you after a while," he said, in answer to their eager, questioning looks; "but just now I must speak alone with Eldiva. Come with me my love."

CHAPTER XV.

MEETING AND PARTING.

"Come my love, come to the house with me. I have something to tell you," continued old Mr. Wells, as he drew Eldiva's hand within his arm, and led her through the trees towards the open lawn.

"You have bad news! I see it in your face! What is it? Tell me quickly!" exclaimed the girl, who was pale and trembling.

"Mr. John Daw is not well, my dear, not at all well," began the old gentleman.

"He is ill—he is very ill—dying perhaps! He has sent for me! I know it! He said he would send for me at last! He said we should meet in death, if not in life! Oh! tell me all! and tell me at once!" impetuously exclaimed the wife.

"My dear, you seem to have divined it all. It is as you say," replied Mr. Wells, speaking very gently, as he led her up to the piazza and placed her in a chair.

"He is dying, then—dying!" wailed Eldiva, covering her face with her hands, and sinking back in her chair.

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"No, no; not so bad as that—not nearly so bad as that!" hastily declared the old gentleman; "but he is ill, and he wishes to see you. Indeed, his illness, so far as I can hear, seems to be more of the mind than of the body, and to be caused by his distress at the estrangement between you. Let us hope for the best. The sight of you will most likely restore him to health."

"Then why are we lingering here?" exclaimed Eldiva, rising hurriedly. "Have you ordered the carriage, uncle? I need not wait to pack. You can have what is needful sent after me!"

"Stay, my dear, one instant. Your escort, Mr. Daly, has been riding hard day and night to bring you this message, and he *must* have an hour or so for rest and refreshment before setting out again."

"Then let some one else escort me—some one who is fresh—Lance Roslyn or Phœbus Verne. I *must* go at once! Two hours' delay may deprive me of the possibility of ever seeing him alive again! Oh! uncle, attend to it! I must start immediately, I say!"

"Very well, my dear; Lance Roslyn shall go with you in the carriage. Daly has a horse and can ride after you, when he is rested. I dare say he will be able to overtake you before you get to Horse Head," said Mr. Wells, as he went, first to give the necessary orders, and then to inform the family of the sudden journey, and its cause.

The journey by water, in Miles Tawney's slow-sailing little craft, by the winding course of the river and bay, occupied about a week, from Washington to Bloomfield.

The journey back by land, in nearly a bee line through the forest, with good horses would take but twenty-four hours at most.

At sunrise of the second day, the travellers crossed the Anacostia Bridge, and entered East Washington, just

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as the young city was waking up to its daily life, and took their way through it, while the reville was beating at the Marine Garrison, and the bells were ringing to call the laborers to work at the Navy Yard government shops.

They drove at a good pace to Capitol Hill, and soon drew up before the stately town house of Lord John Daw.

Eldiva was out of the carriage and up at the door before any one could offer to assist her.

And ere she could raise her hand to knock, the door was suddenly opened, not by the porter, but by a dark-complexioned, hump-backed man, who started violently at the sight of the lady, and then rushing past her without a word, ran down the steps and off towards the outer gate.

"His lordship's secretary, the most eccentric fellow you ever saw in your life!" explained Mr. Richard Daly, as he overtook the young lady and offered his arm to lead her into the house.

"And being eccentric, all the more suitable to be his lordship's secretary!" commented Lance Roslyn, who had only stopped a moment to tell the driver to take the carriage around to the stables and put it up, and then had followed his two companions.

"How is Mr. John Daw?" inquired Richard Daly of the old porter, who was now on duty in the hall—for Eldiva, choked by emotion, could not speak at all.

"Mr. John is very low, sir. The doctor has been here all night."

"Thank Heaven, he still lives?" breathed Eldiva, almost inaudibly, but with a sigh of relief.

"Is he conscious?" inquired Daly.

"At times, sir. He is so just at present, as I have just

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heard from his lordship's secretary who left him a few minutes ago."

"Thank Heaven!" again breathed Eldiva, and then, having recovered her powers of speech, she turned impatiently to Richard Daly and demanded:

"What are we waiting for? Why do we not go to him at once?"

"Because we must not startle him, my dear young lady."

Eldiva dropped into a chair.

"Where is my lord?" inquired Daly.

"My lord is sitting at the bedside of Mr. John, whom he has scarcely left day or night," replied the porter.

"I will go and tell his lordship that you are here," said Daly, bending to whisper to Eldiva. Then turning to the butler, he said—"Show this lady into the small reception-room, and get her a cup of coffee immediately. She has been travelling all night and needs refreshment.

And as the agent glided swiftly and silently up the thickly-carpeted stairs, the old servant, with a bow, opened a door on the right and saw the young lady into an elegant little apartment, upholstered in dark-blue and gold.

Here Eldiva sank into a deep, restful, cushioned chair, and was directly served by a footman with a fragrant cup of Mocha.

She drank it eagerly, and had just set down the empty cup, when Richard Daly came in to her and said:

"He is better this morning, quite conscious, and suffers no pain. I will take you up to him."

Eldiva arose, and took the man's offered arm, whose support she needed much.

They went up stairs and along the hall on the first

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floor, from which many doors led into drawing-rooms, library, picture gallery; and bed-chambers.

Mr. Daly opened a door on the right, and ushered his companion into a spacious apartment, upholstered in pale green, not darkened, as sick-rooms generally are, but with all the windows hoisted, the shutters open and the light of the newly-risen sun, soft tempered by the half-drawn pale-green silk curtains, pouring in.

In the middle of the room, on a bedstead from which the green silk and lace were lifted high, lay the invalid, propped up with pillows, with both arms lying out languidiy over the counterpane, and looking so changed, so pale and wasted, that Eldiva with difficulty suppressed a scream as she beheld him.

There was no one in the room. Lord John had evidently vacated the chair at the head of the bed and left the place to the husband and wife.

And Mr. Richard Daly had closed the door and retired.

Eldiva, with a feeling of awe that the possible presence of death always evokes in thoughtful minds and loving hearts, approached the bed.

John Daw, turning wistful eyes upon her, held out one emaciated hand and said :

" Eldiva, this has killed me."

" No, no—oh, no, no !" gasped the girl, dropping on her knees at the bedside and clasping and covering with kisses the hand that he had held out to her.

" Yes, dear, yes. Look at me Diva !" he murmured, in a faint voice.

She raised her tearful eyes to his face. How thin and wan it was ! The white light on his forehead was not so deadly white !

" I have been mad, my Eldiva, mad, and, in my madness, hurt you sorely ? But it has killed me, my Eldiva, and now you forgive me," he faltered.

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"You told me all that in your letter, and I wrote back that I had never blamed you, never been angry with you, and had nothing to forgive," wept the once discarded bride of this dying man.

"Yes, you wrote, dear—you wrote good, precious words! But I long to hear your lips speak them, Eldiva. Speak them with your hands clasped in mine and your eyes meeting mine," he murmured, more faintly than before.

"I love you! I love you! I love you!" she replied, showering kisses and tears on his face.

He did not answer these caresses, and, when she raised her head at last from his bosom, she saw the ghastly face rigid, motionless, and unconscious.

"Oh, Heaven, have I killed him! have I killed him!" she exclaimed, frantic with terror, as she glanced around in search of the bell, saw it, rang it violently, and returned to search among the bottles on the table at the bed's head for some restorative.

She found some spirits of ammonia, poured a few drops on her handkerchief, and applied it to his nose.

The door softly opened and Lord John Daw entered the room.

"Oh, my lord, look at him! Look at him! What can we do?" cried Eldiva, beside herself with distress.

"He has fainted again. This is the second time since his first attack. Ah, I feared it would be so, I feared it would be so," sighed the old gentleman, going to the bell and ringing a second peal that brought nurse and valet into the room.

"Sit down, my dear. You are too unnerved to be anything but a hindrance at this moment," said Lord John to Eldiva, as he led her away from the bed to an easy-chair and placed her in it.

Meantime the nurse and valet had gone vigorously to

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work on the fainting man, and, by stimulating friction, succeeded in restoring him.

"It is unfortunate that Dr. Hamilton has just left the house after spending the night here," said the old gentleman, with a sigh.

"My lord, my master has just opened his eyes and asked for the lady," whispered the valet, coming softly to his lordship's side.

"Very well; go back to him and continue the friction," said Lord John; and then turning to his daughter-in-law, he whispered:

"You may come and sit by him now and hold his hand, if you will, for that may quiet him; but you must not permit any exciting conversation. You see the danger."

"Oh, I will not! I will not! I will be *so careful!*" replied Eldiva, in a subdued but earnest voice.

"That is right," said Lord John.

"But oh, my lord, tell me—tell me what is his malady?" she anxiously inquired.

"The doctors call it nervous exhaustion, but *I* know it is atrophy of the heart. It is hereditary. My mother, his grandmother, died of it. His cousin, the heir apparent of the dukedom, died of it. Neither I nor my brother or sister have it. The malady seems to have skipped a generation and spared us to kill our children," said the afflicted father, who was evidently controlling his grief by a very strong effort.

"Is there *no* hope? None—*none*?" wailed Eldiva, in a half smothered voice.

"I dare not say that. I *hope* there may be hope."

"Oh, Lord John, tell me, tell me, am I to blame for this?" pleaded Eldiva, clasping her hands and lifting her eyes to his face.

"No, my dear, no! Once I naturally believed that you

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were! But my dying boy has sworn to me that you were innocent and he was mad. I do not know what happened at the Wolf's Head to separate you so suddenly, for he has refused to tell me, and, moreover, he has exacted a promise which I could not refuse to give my dying boy, that I should not seek to discover the cause; but he holds you blameless! and his word to that effect entirely exonerates you. Come, my dear, you may sit beside him and hold his hand now," said the old man, gently.

Eldiva took *his* hand and pressed it warmly to her lips, as she answered:

"Oh, Lord John! I thank you for this! From my heart, I thank you!"

"Suppose you call me father, dear? I have no daughter, and soon, very soon, may have no son," whispered Lord John, as he led Eldiva to the chair at the head of the bed.

She, too much overcome by his last words to be able to speak, made no reply, but sank into her seat and took possession of the wasted fingers that were creeping slowly over the coverlet, seeking hers.

The nurse and valet had both retired from the room and the old gentleman was about to turn away from the bedside, when his son spoke faintly:

"Father, do not go yet!"

"I will not, my boy," replied the old lord, seating himself on a corner of the foot of the bed.

"I want to speak to you of my Eldiva," he breathed, almost inaudibly.

"Yes, my boy, it is all as you wish," said Lord John, bending to catch the faltering words.

"You are reconciled—to my Eldiva then?"

"Yes, dear lad; yes, I am."

"Father—you know—that I have hurt her, I have—

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cast—unjust reproach upon her—which may cling—may cling—unless *you* take it away! Only *you* can do that."

"I will, dear boy! I will!"

"You will be a father to her, who has no father."

"I will, my boy! I will!"

"And you, my Eldiva," said the dying man, closing his fingers upon the hand that held them, "you will be a daughter to the old man, who will have no child."

"I will, dearest! I will!" sobbed Eldiva, trying to meet his eyes through the blinding rain of her tears.

"Then I am the more willing to die. Oh! if I had my life to live over again, I would try to make everybody happier," said the poor young man, with a sigh of regret over lost opportunities.

"Dear lad! would you like to see the Rev. Mr. Allen?" gently inquired the old lord.

"Yes, I would. And I would like to take the sacrament. Send to him—tell him so. Let him come prepared," answered John Daw.

The old gentleman, instead of ringing for a servant arose and stole quietly out of the room to give the necessary order.

Eldiva, sitting now on the side of the bed, with her husband's hand in hers and his eyes resting contentedly on her, felt a strange peace flow into her spirit.

"The present seems like eternal calm," he whispered "It seems as if we never had been estranged and never could be parted."

She bent and pressed her lips to his, murmuring tender words of assent.

Lord John Daw re-entered the room and seated himself, as before, on the foot of the bed.

The dying man seemed to have fallen into a doze, with his hand clasped in that of his wife.

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All was very quiet in the room, until a servant entered silently, stole to the side of his master, and whispered :

"Dr. Ewell and Dr. McWalter are down stairs, my lord."

"The physicians called in consultation with Dr. Hamilton are here ; but we must wait until our patient awakes before calling them up to see him," said the old gentleman, in a low voice, to Eldiva.

She bent her head in reply ; but the dying man opened his eyes, and said :

"I am not sleeping. I will see the physicians now if you wish."

"Show the doctors up here, Peter," ordered Lord John Daw.

The servant left the room, and all was very still until the entrance of the two physicians.

As Lord John Daw courteously welcomed them, the door was once more opened and the family physician, Dr. Hamilton, who was a minute late, came.

Silent bows were exchanged between the gentlemen, a few words of inquiry were put and answered between the last-mentioned physician and the master of the house relative to the patient, and then Lord John led his daughter-in-law to the opposite end of the room and left the bedside to the possession of the doctors.

They made their examination, talked a little with each other, and a very little with the patient, all in a quiet and subdued tone, and then they left him, and with bows and waves of the hands to the occupants of the room, they withdrew to the library to hold their consultation.

It was Dr. Hamilton, who was so familiar with the house as to feel almost at home in it, who led them into that sanctum.

The handsome room lay in a rich, subdued, cathedral light, and none of the doctors noticed that behind a cur-

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tain in the recess of the bay window sat a dark, hump-backed man, bending over a writing-desk.

The three doctors seated themselves around a table that stood conveniently about midway down the long room.

Here they entered upon the perplexing case of the patient.

The unsuspected witness, the humpback, in the bay window, could not hear all that was said, but he heard quite enough to draw him into eager interest and close attention, and so he was able to get the drift of the consultation.

The patient was surely sinking—death was but the question of a few hours. The disease was an obscure one; the father's opinion that it was an inherited atrophy of the heart was all nonsense. There should be a *post-mortem* examination in the interests of science and humanity. The old lord would never consent to it; but it must be made, nevertheless. The present treatment —stimulation—powerful stimulation—would prolong life for a few hours. If he should faint a third time he would never rally again, and so on, and so on.

One of the doctors wrote a prescription, the other two examined it, and approved.

And then they all arose and went out.

The two consulting physicians left the house.

Dr. Hamilton remained, and took the prescription up to the sick-room.

The dark humpback, who had overheard a part of the consultation, leaned his large head upon his hands and ruminated for a long time, and then murmured:

"I begin to see light. Shall I do it? Shall I? Shall I? Would it be justifiable? Yes, I think it would!"

And he wrote a few lines and arose and left the house.

Meantime Dr. Hamilton had gone to the bedside of

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his patient, who lay seemingly sleeping, and watched by his father and his wife.

"Where is the nurse?" softly inquired the doctor, with the prescription in his hand.

"We are his nurses. We will never leave him again to the care of any stranger," whispered the father, in reply, and the wife looked up and nodded assent.

"Then send and get this prescription put up, and give it to him as directed," said Dr. Hamilton, and he bowed and left the room.

Lord John Daw followed him into the hall and inquired:

"What is the result of the consultation?"

"Mr. Daw has no disease of the heart whatever!"

"Ah, then, that is better than I thought. That is hopeful. What else? What is his malady?"

"He has none, apparently. He suffers from extreme nervous exhaustion, and just now requires powerful stimulation. There is nothing else to be done.

"Then there is hope?" anxiously inquired the father.

"Certainly there is hope," replied the family physician, telling the benevolent falsehood which is popularly believed to be blotted out by the tears of the recording angel.

And Dr. Hamilton went away, contending with his own conscience that "while there is life there is hope," and, if not in this world, at best in the next.

And the father returned, comforted, to the bedside of his dying son.

"The doctors say that there is no heart disease—nothing but nervous exhaustion. We must stimulate him powerfully, and there is hope," he whispered to his daughter-in-law.

She smiled softly and bowed her head in thankfulness.

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At that point a servant entered the room and whispered that the Rev. Mr. Allen had arrived.

"Let him come up," murmured John Daw, in a faint voice.

"We thought you were asleep, dear lad," said the old gentleman.

"No, only resting, quietly resting."

"Are you quite able to see the minister?"

"Quite."

"Then, Peter, ask Mr. Allen please to walk up, and do you take this prescription to Gunther's apothecary shop and get it put up. And be very quick about it, do you hear?"

"Yes, my lord," replied the man, as he left the room.

"Father," murmured the failing man.

Lord John stooped to hear his words.

"Kiss me before the minister comes in."

The old man stooped and pressed his lips to those of his son, which he shuddered to find icy cold.

"Father, for every offence that I have ever given you, I ask your forgiveness now."

"Dear lad! dear lad! you have never offended me in your life. It is I who should ask your forgiveness," replied the old gentleman, much moved.

"Ah, no, a most indulgent father always, who never in your life refused me anything. Kiss me again. We love each other and part in perfect peace, do we not?"

"We meet in perfect peace! We do not part! oh, we do not part!" cried the old man.

"For a little time, yes! only for a little time and then we meet for ever. Let Eldiva come to me now, dear father."

Lord John Daw withdrew a little towards his seat at the foot of the bed, and the wife bent over her husband.

"Kiss me, dearest. *You* have already forgiven me.

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We are one. Hold my hand through all the coming rites until I relinquish yours to take the bread and wine, then clasp my hand again and hold it to the end."

She stooped and dropped kisses and tears that she could not restrain upon his face, and murmured words of infinite tenderness and undying love.

The Rev. Mr. Allen came quietly into the room, and the old lord arose to receive him; led him to the bedside and gave him a chair.

The minister was a slight, pale, grave man of middle-age, and clothed in clerical black cloth.

He shook hands almost silently with the young lady, and then addressed a few words of sympathy and encouragement to the man on the bed.

He talked with him a little while on the Saviour's infinite love and power to save, and then entered upon the solemn service of the communion, doubly solemn when administered at a death-bed.

Lord John Daw knelt on one side of the bed, Eldiva knelt on the other, holding her husband's hand clasped in her own, and with her head bent upon it.

Only twice she let go that hand, when with the dying man they all took the bread, and again when they took the wine.

After which she clasped his hand again, found it growing cold, and pressed it to her warm bosom while the concluding prayer was made.

She held that cold hand close to her bosom and breathed upon it, while with all her anxious, throbbing heart she followed the words of the minister, and when the prayers were over she bowed her head lower, and pressed her lips upon the icy hand to receive the benediction:

"The peace of God, which passeth all understanding, keep your hearts and minds in the knowledge and love

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of God, and of His son Jesus Christ, our Lord. And the blessing of God Almighty, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, be amongst you and remain with you always. Amen."

With the last word of the benediction, Eldiva lifted her head and looked in the face of her husband.

That face was still and fair; an infinite peace had fallen on it.

Lord John drew near and looked into it.

The minister bent over it.

"Our brother has gone!" said the latter; his soul has entered into rest through prayer and benediction."

O, my son! my son!" wailed the bereaved father, sinking on his knees, and burying his gray head in the bedclothes.

The minister turned to look at the young widow. She had silently swooned and slipped down upon the carpet. The fasting, fatigue, and excitement of the last thirty-six hours, culminating in this crowning grief, had been too much for her.

The minister raised her reverently in his arms and laid her on a lounge at the opposite end of the room.

Then he went down stairs to find the housekeeper and his lordship's secretary, to tell them what had occurred, and to send assistance to the chamber of death.

He readily found the housekeeper, and dispatched her to her scene of duty; but when he went to the library to look for the secretary, he found only a letter directed to Lord John Daw, and marked "Important and Immediate."

This he took and carried up stairs to await a favorable opportunity of presenting it, in person, to his lordship.

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On the upper floor the grave, subdued bustle that follows a death was already beginning.

Lance Roslyn, in his sturdy young arms, was bearing the light unconscious form of Eldiva towards a vacant bed-chamber, to which a weeping house-maid, walking before, was showing him.

Lord John Daw, pale, tremulous, crushed and despairing, had come out of the chamber of death and was aimlessly walking up and down the hall.

Mr. Richard Daly, hat and stick in hand, hurried out of a cross passage, and down the front stairs, as if bound upon some important out-door errand.

The Rev. Mr. Allen looked at Lord John Daw as the latter paced slowly up and down the corridor, his head bowed down to his breast, and his hands clasped behind his back.

Mr. Allen hesitated for a moment, wondering whether or not he should interrupt the old gentleman.

To intrude upon him with any business at such a time seemed almost impertinent. Yet this letter was directed to him, in the handwriting of his private and confidential secretary, and it was marked "Important and Immediate." It required therefore, prompt attention. It might also serve to divert the afflicted father from the contemplation of his bereavement.

He would give him the letter.

He drew it from his pocket and took it to the old gentleman, saying:

"Pardon me, my lord, for interrupting you at such a time, but in going to the library to look for your secretary I found this letter, which seems to require instant attention."

Read it to me, then, reverend sir. It is a begging letter, no doubt," said the old gentleman, listlessly.

"I think not. It is directed in the hand of your pri-

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vate secretary, and it may be confidential," said the minister, hesitating to open it.

"Read it to me, my good sir, read it. I have not a secret in the world, and if any one ventures to write secrets to me, they do it at their own proper peril. Read it to me, reverend sir, for unhappily I can no longer see to read myself," persisted the old nobleman, seating himself in a high-backed hall chair and inviting the minister, by a gesture, to follow his example.

Mr. Allen, thus adjured, sat down, opened the letter and read:

"IN THE LIBRARY, Thursday, 11 A.M.

"TO LORD JOHN DAW—*My Lord:* I have just received intelligence of the swiftly impending death of my only brother, and am, therefore, obliged to leave your lordship's service at once, and I fear forever.

"I dare not disturb your lordship at your solemn and anxious watch beside the sick bed of your son, and therefore I take this way of thanking you heartily for all your kindness to me, and of bidding you, my lord, a most grateful and affectionate farewell.

"Your lordship's obedient servant, R. D."

"Ah! poor, poor fellow, sighed the old gentleman, as soon as the minister had finished reading the letter. "I am very sorry for him. He, too! Ah! none escape. Death is ever bereaving some one or other. All, have to drink of the same dread cup. Poor fellow! It is well that my agent, before leaving the city for Bloomfield on Tuesday morning, paid the poor secretary his quarter's salary, for he has left no address. Yes, it is well he got his money."

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CHAPTER XVI.

THE MOVEMENTS OF THE HUNCHBACK.

A few moments after the minister had left the house the family physician came on his regular evening visit to his patient.

Hearing from the attendants that John Daw had passed away, and having their words confirmed by the presence of the undertaker's men, Dr. Hamilton asked to see, Lord John Daw, and was shown at once into the library, where the bereaved father received the visitor with grave courtesy.

After expressing his sympathy and sorrow at his death, the doctor delicately entered upon the obscure nature of the malady that had carried off the patient, and hinted, in the cause of science and humanity the expediency of a *post-mortem* examination.

But at the very first suggestion the fiery old lord exploded into a passion of grief and rage.

Starting from his chair, and trotting up and down the floor, he forbade the physician ever to mention such a plan to him again, protesting that no argument in this world should ever induce him to permit a surgeon's scalpel to profane the dead body of his dear departed son.

What could the doctor do but beg pardon, entreat the afflicted father to forget that the subject of an autopsy had ever been broached, bid good-afternoon, and leave the irritable old man to recover composure in solitude.

But for Lord John Daw to recover his temper was not, under the circumstances, so easy.

The weather was unusually cool for the third week in September, a circumstance that enabled Lord John Daw to defer the burial of his son's remains until the fourth

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day after death—a delay that would not otherwise have been permitted, as the expedient of ice caskets had not then been invented.

Mrs. Roslyn, with her little daughter, Nea, arrived in Washington in time for the funeral, and came by invitation immediately to The Hill.

The obsequies of the dead heir were magnificent. In vain had Richard Daly, his lordship's agent, expostulated with his employer against such lavish extravagance. The poor old "millionaire lord," the "mad lord," had replied:

"I would have given *all* to him in life! why not give a part to him in death?" And then he turned an obstinately deaf ear to all arguments against the squandering of money in vain shows.

One hundred mourning coaches, filled with the elite of the city, the President and cabinet, the diplomatic corps, officers of the army and of the navy, and so forth, followed the hearse to the cemetery, where the body was temporarily deposited in the public vault.

At the gate of the cemetery the funeral guests dispersed, driving off to their various destinations. Mrs. Roslyn went to Shadow Hall, taking with her the young widowed bride and the little blind girl, and Lord John Daw returned alone to his desolate home.

It happened that at the very same moment at which the iron-grated doors of the receiving vault closed upon the remains of young John Daw, one of the consulting physicians on the obscure malady of which he had died, being in the office of the faculty at the Medical College, received a mysterious letter, through the hands of the commonplace postman.

It was to this effect:

"If the professors of the Blank Medical College wish, in the interests of science and humanity, to make an

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autopsy of the body of the late John Daw, they can have an opportunity of doing so, in a house near the cemetery, at midnight this night. At the present writing the subject is in a perfect state of preservation, and will probably continue so for many hours. The costs for placing the subject in their hands will be one hundred dollars, and the sole condition is that, after the autopsy, the subject shall be reverently replaced in the coffin and returned to the vault.

"The writer of this letter is no common body-snatcher, nor will he employ any such in this work, though he acts from the mixed motives of profiting himself while benefiting others.

"The learned professors may now consult and make up their minds.

"The writer will call at nine o'clock at night for their answer, and should it be favorable, to conduct them to the place where they may view their subject."

The physician who received this letter—and whom we will call Dr. Lucas, because we are treading upon delicate ground here—turned it about and read it over and over without being able to come to any conclusion.

He was waiting for his brothers of the faculty who were to meet that afternoon to consult upon some college business, and so he resolved to submit the matter of the letter and the proposed autopsy to their judgment, upon the recognized principle, that "in a multitude of counsellors there is safety."

Now letters upon this theme often found their way to the office of the Medical College, but they were generally unclean, inodorous, and ill-spelled, and such as might have emanated from the eminent artists in that particular line—Messrs. Burke and Hare—and they received little or no attention from the faculty.

This was a very different sort of letter and it offered an exceptional temptation—the decorous examination of a subject for the sake of discovering the sources of an

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obscure disease which had baffled the skill of the physicians, and then the restoration of the body to the coffin and the vault.

Really, "in the interests of science and humanity" the professors of the Medical College thought they must entertain the proposal of their unknown but very plausible correspondent—or, receive him and hear what he had to say, at the very least.

While this conference was going on in the office of the faculty, another one on the same subject was progressing in the cottage of the keeper of the cemetery.

The sun had set and the cemetery gates were locked for the night.

But the cottage of the keeper, built in the wall, had two outer doors—one front door opening on the road, and one back door opening on the cemetery.

It was twilight in the little office of the keeper, who was a bachelor and lived alone in the cottage. He had just closed his desk, either from want of light or because he had finished his work, or for both reasons, when there came a rap at the outer door, followed immediately by the rather unceremonious entrance of a dark-complexioned, humpbacked man, who at once dropped into the only other chair in the office.

"I hope you have been thinking of what I proposed to you on the part of the professors, Condit?" said the newcomer.

"Mr. Dee, I have; and I can't see my way clear to it. I have been keeper here for five years, and had many a chance offered me, if I would have accepted it; but I never would have nothing to do with grave-robbing!" replied Condit.

"Of course not. It would have been a crime. But this is nothing of the sort. Let me explain. You have only to get the coffin from the vault and into this room

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at midnight, and allow the doctors to make a neat *post-mortem*, and then return the coffin all right into the vault again," replied the hunchback.

"What do they want a *post-mortem* for?"

"To find out what disease the man died of, so they may be able to treat and save other people who may have the same symptoms. Don't you see that this is a work of philanthropy you are asked to engage in? Don't you see how many lives may be saved through the knowledge gained by this *post-mortem* examination?"

The hunchback entered into a long argument that need not here be repeated. It is enough to say that he convinced the keeper and secured his assistance in the work of the night.

At eight o'clock that evening Dr. L., having had his tea, sat waiting in his office for the coming of his mysterious correspondent.

The clock had not yet struck the hour when there came a knock at the office door, followed by the entrance of the hunchback.

The doctor looked up in some little surprise at the appearance of his visitor.

The hunchback bowed and said:

"You received a note from me this morning, sir, asking the privilege of an interview at this hour."

"Ah! yes. I have been expecting you. You have come in regard to the—"

"Yes, Doctor."

"Take a chair," said the physician, rising and placing one for the visitor.

"You have read my letter, and—"

"Have concluded to accept your terms. Yes," said the doctor.

"Then—at the gate of the cemetery—at midnight."

"Very well, I will be on hand."

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The hunchback arose, bowed, and departed.

"And I never once thought of asking his name," said the doctor to himself.

It was a dark and overclouded night when Dr. Lucas, with a brother physician and two medical students, reached the gates of the cemetery.

At that moment the front door of the keeper's cottage opened and the keeper himself came out and peered cautiously around.

The four gentlemen as cautiously approached him.

"Hist!" said the keeper.

"Whist!" replied one of the medical students.

"Is it the gentlemen from the college?" inquired the keeper.

"Yes," responded the student.

"Come this way, then, gents, into the house. The great gate can't be opened at this hour," said the keeper, leading the way to the door of the cottage, which seemed in utter darkness.

"Where is the person who wrote me the letter this morning and called at my office this evening?" inquired Dr. Lucas.

"Meaning the—a—gentleman with a—a stoop in his shoulders?" daintily inquired the keeper.

"Yes!—the hunchbacked man!" shortly explained the doctor.

"He is—well—gone on a little business of his own that couldn't get on without him, but he left me an order on your honorable medicarants to treat with me instead of him," said the keeper, opening the door and preceding the gentlemen into the cottage.

He carefully closed the door and bolted it, before he struck a light that revealed the inside of the room.

Every window-shutter was closed and every thick wall-paper blind was drawn down to prevent the least ray

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of light from gleaming out and betraying the lawless midnight work going on within.

There in the midst of the room, on a long table, stood a handsome rosewood coffin richly mounted with silver. The top, which was partly removed, bore a silver plate, on which was engraved the following inscription :

JOHN DAW.
Born September 21st, 18—
Died September 23rd, 18—
Aged 25 years.

The doctors and their assistants gathered around the coffin. The two students lifted the lid and stood it up against the wall.

Dr. Lucas, at the same time, unfolded the linen winding sheet, revealing the body in it its fine white merino shroud ; for in those days corpses were not buried "in their habits as they lived," or had lived.

"It is in an excellent state of preservation," whispered Dr. Lucas. "How very natural it looks—only a little whiter than I saw it last a few hours before death. Lend me a hand here."

The two students took hold of the coffin and drew it to the edge of the table. Then they lifted out the body and laid it on the table, and removed the coffin and stood it up against the wall.

The doctors drew near. Dr. Lucas gently raised the shoulders of the "subject," while one of his assistants drew off the sleeves of the shroud, for not even that was to be mutilated. The autopsy was to be conducted with all consideration and reverence.

When the arms, chest, and shoulders were uncovered, the doctor gently lowered the body on the board again and held out his hand to his second assistant, who stood by with an open case of instruments.

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The student selected a fine-tempered scalpel and gave it to his preceptor.

The doctor beckoned his companions, who approached and looked over him as he began to work. He laid down his instrument for an instant, and, with his fingers, tenderly parted the blonde hair on the white brow, and called the attention of his companions to the strangely livid, snow-white spot or "blaze" in the middle of the forehead, which he said that the family of the deceased had always associated with the obscure, hereditary malady which was supposed to have carried off this young man.

I have never seen such a phenomenon on the face of any other person, nor can I attempt to connect it with the disease, or to account for it in any manner, though the present investigation may throw some light upon the subject."

So saying, Dr. Lucas picked up his scalpel again, and, parting the hair with his left fingers, began to cut through the scalp preparatory to laying open the brain.

But scarcely had the edge of the instrument incised the skin when the doctor started back and dropped the scalpel with every expression of surprise and dismay.

The body had shuddered at the cut! The wound had bled! The scalpel was red!

"What's amiss?" inquired Dr. Morris, while the two students looked on in perplexity.

"The man is not dead," breathed Dr. Lucas, with a long drawn sigh.

"Not dead? He was as cold as ice and nearly as hard when we handled him," said the elder student, staring from the speaker to the subject.

"*That* he was," asserted the other student.

"Look, then! See!" exclaimed Dr. Lucas, pointing to the bleeding flesh wound on the scalp.

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"By Jove, it is a fact!" cried the first student.

"The poor fellow is certainly alive!" said the second student.

"Come, come, no time must be lost in trying to restore him!" said Dr. Morris, taking the wrist of the unconscious man and feeling his pulse.

"Here, Keeper Condit! Come here!" called Dr. Lucas recovering his self-possession.

The keeper crept out from some obscure corner of the room, and, trembling, approached the group of doctors that were gathered around the table with the body extended upon it.

"Great goodness, gentlemen! what is all this about?" demanded the affrighted keeper.

"If you have any brandy about the premises bring it here quickly," ordered Dr. Lucas.

"Ye-ye-yes-sir, but what does it all mean?" inquired the terrified keeper, as he darted to a corner cupboard and produced a black bottle.

"It means that this man we thought dead still lives, and if we can restore him living to his father your everlasting fortune is made!" answered one of the young students, as he snatched the bottle from the keeper's hand and passed it over to his preceptor.

"Oh, gentlemen, the old lord will ruin me for my share in this, if it ever should come to his knowledge!" wailed Condit.

"He might have done so 'if it had ever come to his knowledge' under other circumstances; but under *these* he will reward you. This happy accident may restore his son and make your fortune."

"Lord grant it, gentlemen!" said the poor fellow, trembling in what the doctors thought an inexplicable manner.

"Is there a bed on this floor?" inquired Dr. Morris.

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"In the next room, gentlemen," said the keeper, throwing open a side door and giving a view of a neat bedchamber.

There they immediately bore the body of the living but unconscious man, and there they applied all the restoratives at hand for his recovery.

It was a quarter after twelve when their experiments commenced. It was two o'clock before the man breathed freely, but he was still unconscious.

Then, after a short consultation between the two doctors, it was determined to remove the patient to the house of Dr. Morris, which was the nearest at hand, and where he might be treated privately for the present, until it could be ascertained whether he would live or die; for it would be a needless cruelty, as they said, to make known his resuscitation to his afflicted father unless that resuscitation was to go on to full recovery.

Dr. Morris was a childless widower, living quite alone, and attended only by colored slaves who loved and revered him to that extent that his word was absolute law and gospel to them; so that his private patient would remain a dead secret in his house.

A bier was borrowed from the cemetery, and a bed made upon it.

The patient was carefully lifted and carried out and stretched upon it, and covered with a dark quilt. Then one of the strong young medical students took the fore-handles, and the other one the back-handles, and they bore him away from the keeper's cottage, down the lane that led along the cemetery wall towards the Navy Yard Hill.

Dr. Lucas walked before to see that the way was clear.

Dr. Morris walked behind to guard the rear.

And so they crept along "in the dead waste and middle of the night," and through the dense double darkness of

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the hour and the clouds, unperceived and unsuspected, they passed on, and arrived at Dr. Morris's house, where, in a chamber at the top of the house, they deposited their strange patient.

There, for many days, the son of Lord John Daw, and the heir of his uncle's dukedom, hovered between life and death, tended by the best medical skill in the city.

In the meantime the old lord, ignorant of what had occurred, and unable to bear the loneliness and desolation of his own magnificent home, was making preparations for an extensive tour over the whole of the habitable world—or the practicable part of it. He even meditated a voyage to Terra-del-Fuego. But his first goal was to be Egypt and Asia Minor.

He meant to start on his long journey just so soon as he had removed the remains of his son from the receiving vault in which they had been temporarily laid, and deposited them in the grave that was to be their final resting place.

His old valet was to attend him in his journey, and his housekeeper was to be left in charge of The Hill, and his agent in care of his estate.

He had advertised for a travelling secretary and amanuensis to accompany him, but as yet had met no satisfactory response.

His young daughter-in-law, Eldiva, went to see him every day. He received her always with affection, but never asked her to prolong her visit or to repeat it.

When he first told her of the projected tour around the world, by which he had hoped to distract his grief, he added that he had taken care to provide for *her* wants by placing twenty-five thousand dollars to her account in the United States Bank at Philadelphia, which she might draw upon at sight; and that he had made a new will, in

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which he had left to her The Hill, and revenues to keep it up.

Poor Eldiva answered her father-in-law that, while she was very grateful for his munificence, she cared much more for his affection than for his money, and that she would be best pleased if he would only allow her to travel with him around the world, and wait on him and nurse him and amuse him as if she were indeed his daughter. She said that love should teach her to serve him better than his valet, and to help him more than his secretary, and to divert him more than either.

The desolate old father smiled sadly as he thanked her for her zeal, but answered her that she did not understand the case. The long tour was not a suitable one for a young lady to undertake, even under the protection of her old father-in-law. A woman instead of being a help and solace, under such circumstances, would only be a burden to herself and a care to him. But he appreciated her devotion. Women had always been unlucky, *very* unlucky, to him, he added, so that he had grown superstitious in regard to them. But he now loved and esteemed his sweet daughter-in-law, notwithstanding.

So the proposal ended.

One morning, early in the month of October, a message was brought to the young widow from her father in-law, that on the next morning he should call for her to accompany him in his carriage to the cemetery, whither he was going to superintend the removal of his deceased son's remains from the receiving vault to the grave which had been prepared for them.

This message revived all the freshness and poignancy of the girl's first grief, and threw her into a paroxysm of hysterical tears and sobs; but in the midst of them she returned an answer that she would be ready to attend her father-in-law at the appointed time.

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Accordingly, the next day at ten o'clock, Eldiva, clothed in the deepest mourning, sat waiting in the front parlor for the call of Lord John Daw.

A few minutes before the hour struck, a mourning-coach, drawn by four black horses, drew up before the house, and the old lord, clothed in black from head to foot, and with a deep crape band on the hat which he carried in his black-gloved hand, descended and entered the door that was already opened for him.

Eldiva arose to meet him, and sank sobbing on his breast.

He kissed her in trembling silence, and then drew her arm under his own, and led her out and put her into the coach.

As soon as they were seated, side by side, the horses started at a slow pace towards the east.

An hour's drive brought them to the cemetery, the broad gates of which were thrown wide open to let the mourning-coach pass in.

They drove down the main avenue to the receiving vault, where the Rector of Christ Church, the sexton, and a squad of assistants were awaiting the party.

"Where is the keeper?" inquired Lord John Daw of the man nearest to him, as his lordship alighted and handed his daughter-in-law from the carriage.

"Mr. Condit, sir, is extremely ill at the City Hospital, and I have been acting for him ever since he was taken there," answered the man, respectfully lifting his hat.

"And who are you, pray?"

"My name is Evans, sir, and I am one of the assistants here," replied the man, with another bow, as he produced the key of the vault and began to unlock the door.

The door of the vault was now open and the squad of assistants filed in and reverently brought out the coffin

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and laid it on the hand-bier, which four of the men immediately raised to carry it to the grave.

The minister walked ahead, as in an ordinary funeral. The father, with the widow on his arm, followed behind.

The distance was short.

As soon as they reached the spot the men sat down the bier and prepared to lower the coffin into the grave, when the father lifted up his hand and said :

"Stop !"

The men stopped and all looked at the old man.

"I must look upon the face of my dear son once more before the earth hides it. Open the coffin," he said, in a solemn voice of authority.

The bearers looked from one to another and hesitated to obey him.

My *dear* Lord John, my *good* friend," expostulated the rector—"will this be wise? Will not this be an ordeal too severe, too distressing for you and—for this lady?"

"It will not be so for *me?* If it should be so for *her*—you can lead her away before the lid is lifted," replied the old man.

But Eldiva clung to the arm of her father-in-law, hiding her face on his shoulder.

The men meanwhile had drawn the screws, and now, as they lifted the lid, the old lord, with a heavy groan, bent over the coffin, to take that last look at the face of his dead son for which he had so desperately striven.

But the groan was instantly succeeded by such a cry of horror and indignation from the aged lips as startled every one present and caused Eldiva to lift her head, and all to look where he was pointing, to see what could be the matter.

Exclamations of amazement and consternation burst from every beholder, as well there might.

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The coffin contained no human body, but a load of about a hundred and fifty pounds of soft earth!

"Who has committed this outrage! WHO?" demanded the old man in a paroxysm of rage and despair.

"My dear friend! Let me relieve you of the lady! See! she has fainted! She is falling!" exclaimed the Rev. Mr. Allen receiving the form of the young widow in his arms as she was slipping from the hold of her father-in-law.

"Thank you.—No, not fainting. Just help me to a seat—and—never mind me," murmured Eldiva, in an expiring voice, as, pale and trembling, she permitted the rector to take her to the nearest bench, where he left her leaning against the trunk of the oak tree which overshadowed it.

The rector returned to the side of the old lord, who was still shaking with grief and fury.

"Answer me, you fellows! WHO has committed this atrocious crime?" he demanded of the panic-stricken sexton and grave-diggers who stood around.

"Lord in heaven knows, gentlemen all, I don't know no more about it than the babe unborn!" answered the sexton, and his companions followed suit, in words to the same effect.

"*You*, sir! What is your name, who are staying here in the keeper's place? What is your name?

"Evans, my lord."

"You, Evans, then! How long have you been acting here?"

"Ever since the keeper was taken to the City Hospital, three days ago, my lord."

"Then you could have had nothing to do with this outrage, which must necessarily have been perpetrated within a few hours after the coffin was deposited in the vault."

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"Nothing on earth to do with it, Heaven truly knows, my lord."

"How long was the keeper ill before he was carried to the hospital?"

"Well, my lord, not more than a day or two."

"Then *he* is implicated in this felony! *He* had the keys of the receiving vault, and they could not have been obtained but through him! I will see that man and question him! Here or in the hospital ward, sick or well, he shall answer me, and give up his confederates! I know already whom to suspect, and if I can but bring the crime home to the real criminals, by all my hopes of Heaven, I will prosecute them, be they whom they may, to the utmost extent of the law. I swear I will not leave the country until I have seen them all in the State Prison. Come, my poor Eldiva. Let us return home."

CHAPTER XVII.

THE TEST—THE TRIUMPH.

Lord John Daw drove back again to Shadow Hall, where he left his distressed daughter-in-law in the care of her friends, and then he drove to the City Hospital, which he reached at an early hour of the afternoon.

He alighted and passed through the middle front door which he found open, and then knocked at a side door in the hall which led into the office of the house physician.

That functionary soon made his appearance, and recognizing in the visitor one of the most wealthy and munificent of the patrons of the hospital, he bowed, and said:

"Ah, good afternoon, my lord, I hope your lordship is quite well. Pray walk in and sit down, my lord."

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The old gentleman nodded and followed his conductor into the office, and sat down in the chair that was handed him.

"How can I have the honor of serving your lordship?" inquired the young house physician.

"Have you got a man here named Condit—the superintendent of the Congressional Burying Ground?" abruptly inquired Lord John.

"Yes, my lord; came in a few days ago; bad case of typhoid fever, my lord; quite delirious at times."

"Ah! I would like to see him."

"See him! Condit!"

"Yes, *now!*"

"He is quite delirious," respectfully suggested the house doctor.

Lord John was greatly disappointed, but he had to submit to the inevitable, and postpone his interview with Condit. He quietly withdrew from the hospital, resolving, however, to call again the next day and try to repeat his experiment.

He re-entered his coach, and returned to The Hill in time for his solitary dinner.

Before Lord John Daw had another opportunity of seeing Condit the man had passed away from all earthly interviews.

Early the next morning Lord John Daw drove out to the hospital, and was met, as before, by the house physician.

"How's the man Condit?" inquired his lordship.

"He's gone, my lord; passed away at sunrise this morning," gravely replied the doctor.

"Ah! I'm sorry!—very sorry!"

He remained standing in deep thought for a few moments, and then he left the hospital, re-entered his carriage and drove home.

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There, when he had exchanged his coat for a dressing-gown, and had refreshed himself with a glass of wine and a biscuit, he lay down on a library sofa and sent for his confidential agent, Mr. Richard Daly.

"Richard," he said, when the gentleman made his appearance, "I mean to prosecute those scoundrels who have violated the sanctuary of the dead! You are a lawyer and you must help me to do it, and tell me first of all how to begin."

"Why, my lord, under correction, I should say, begin as the receipt to cook a hare begins—'first catch your hare,'" said Daly, with a demure smile.

"What do you mean by that? What do you mean by that?" quickly inquired Lord John.

"We must find the men who robbed the vault before we can do anything else. And as yet we have not the least clew."

"Ah! no matter who they may be, when I find them I will prosecute them to the utmost extent of the law!" exclaimed the old lord, savagely, as he started from his lounge and began to trot up and down the floor with his black silk dressing-gown sailing behind him.

Daly watched him in silence until the door was opened by a footman, who brought in a card to his master.

Lord John Daw took it, threw himself down into a chair by the table, and squinted at the pasteboard for a few minutes and then handed it over to his agent, saying:

"Do you read it, Richard! My sight grows worse and worse! Who is it, Richard?"

Daly took the card and read as follows:

"GEORGE HAMILTON, M. D. *On important business connected with the late violation of a vault in Congressional Cemetery.*"

"Ah! Dr. Hamilton! He has heard—he has heard

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something! I will see him! I will see him at once! Show the doctor up into this room immediately," said the old gentleman, speaking first to his agent and last to his footman.

"You never suspected your own family physician of such a—" began Daly, but Lord John cut him short.

"Hamilton? Suspect Hamilton? I should sooner suspect you, or myself! No, he was very anxious to have an autopsy, and he put me into a passion by pressing for one: but he is simply incapable of bribing a keeper of the cemetery for such a purpose! No! what brings him here is that he has made some discovery and has to tell me something, very painful, I fear," said the old lord, with a deep sigh.

A few minutes later Dr. Hamilton was ushered into the library, and advanced to the table at which the old lord and his agent sat waiting.

Lord John Daw arose with grave courtesy and held out his hand, saying:

"I am pleased to see you, Doctor."

The physician shook hands with the old nobleman, bowed to the agent, and then sat down.

"You—you—wished to see me on important business, I believe?" said Lord John Daw, who was scarcely able to restrain his impatience to learn *any* news of his lost treasure.

"Yes, my lord, when your lordship is disengaged," replied Dr. Hamilton, with a glance at the agent.

"Ah! you—you would like a private interview?"

"Yes, my lord, certainly, but *only* at your lordship's and this gentleman's convenience," replied the doctor.

"Ah! yes! but we have got through, I think, Richard and I will not detain you longer," said Lord John, politely.

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But the agent had already risen and was bowing his adieux.

And Lord John Daw and his visitor were left alone together.

We must go back for a few days in our story to relate some events which led up to the sudden visit of Dr. Hamilton to Lord John Daw.

After the resuscitated body of Lord John's son had been secretly conveyed to the house of the widower, Dr. Morris, on the Navy Yard Hill, carefully carried up to a third-story bedroom and laid upon a comfortable bed, the doctors gathered around him, made a thorough examination of his case, administered restoratives, and, while watching their effect held a consultation on this strange case.

They decided that the recovery of the patient was so extremely doubtful that it would be cruel and dangerous to inform the bereaved father of his "deceased" son's resuscitation, unless it should go on to full recovery; for if the young man were to die after all, it would be much better that the father should be spared the torture of going through the ordeal of bereavement a second time.

The doctors devoted themselves with all their skill, knowledge and experience to the restoration of their patient—one of them being always on the watch while the others were with their families or visiting their patients.

Dr. Morris, who had the strange case in special charge, was also assisted by the two faithtful old negro servants, Len and Cassy, who would have died rather than betray the confidence of their master.

It is not necessary to dwell upon this "remarkable case of resuscitation," as it was afterwards called.

It is enough to say that every physician in the city, being confidently informed by one of the doctors in

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the secret, came in turn to look at the patient and consult with his attendants.

But the recovery was for many days so doubtful and so tedious that nearly a fortnight from the day of resuscitation had passed before the utmost power of medical skill could raise the patient to a degree of strength and sense to enable him to recognize persons and answer questions.

Among the outside physicians who had been entrusted with the secret was Dr. Hamilton, the medical attendant of Lord John Daw.

Dr. Hamilton had shown less surprise at the fact of the resuscitation than any one else who had heard of it; but he felt great anxiety that the case should go on to full recovery.

He agreed with the other doctors that it would be inexpedient to inform the father of the son's strange condition, unless it should end favorably in the complete restoration of the patient.

He was also among the most devoted and indefatigable of the young gentleman's attendants.

It was on the morning of the thirteenth day that the patient awoke to full consciousness; though his first words savored somewhat of dream or delirium.

"Mother?—are you there?"

Dr. Hamilton, who was sitting by his side, bent over him and said:

"*I* am here, Mr. Daw. How do you find yourself?"

The patient looked at the speaker long and fixedly, and seemed to try to collect his thoughts.

"Do you know me, my dear young friend?" gently inquired the doctor.

"You—I—you are—Dr. Hamilton," replied the patient, somewhat confusedly.

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"Exactly! Your old, familiar family physician. How do you find yourself, Mr. Daw?"

"I—hardly know."

"Certainly; and you shall not be troubled to try and find out. What you want now is refreshment."

And the doctor rang the bell and gave the order, while the patient fell into a gentle doze.

Such was the manner of the young man's return to consciousness at the crisis of his illness.

This crisis had passed safely, and the convalescence followed.

He grew better day by day. He had no knowledge or suspicion that he had ever been supposed to be dead, still less that he had been coffined and confined in a vault.

He evinced but little curiosity concerning his situation, only once inquiring of Dr. Hamilton how it was that he found himself in a strange house instead of his father's home.

And Dr. Hamilton told him no falsehood, but a vailed truth, when he replied that they had brought him to this house to insure quiet, fresh air, and constant medical assiduity.

"I haven't the least recollection of the journey," said the young man, with a sigh of weariness.

"No, my dear sir, you were in a state of perfect unconsciousness when we brought you hither by gentle stages," replied the doctor.

"And my father? How did he like this removal?"

"It was absolutely necessary to your recovery that you should be brought here and—his lordship did not object."

"Whose house is this?"

"The house of Dr. Morris, on Navy Yard Hill."

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"Oh!" said the patient, as he sank into the silence of weariness.

A little later he inquired:

"Has my father been to see me very often?" Then, without waiting for an answer to the first question, he demanded:

"When will he come next?"

"Lord John Daw will come to see you to-morrow morning," said Dr. Hamilton, who had fully determined that now, at length, the father should be notified of his son's continued existence.

The time for the revelation seemed surely to have arrived, for not only was the convalescence of the patient a certainty, but events had occurred within the last twenty-four hours that made this revelation a necessity—the theft of the body from the vault had been discovered by the father himself, who, on going to the cemetery to superintend the final interment, had insisted on having his son's coffin opened, and had then found it filled with earth and gravel. The distress of the father was known to be poignant.

Following soon upon the event was the death of the keeper, which also facilitated affairs, for there was no question *now* of his suffering for his complicity, at least in this world.

And so Dr. Hamilton promised the patient that his father should come to visit him the next morning, and he privately resolved to go and break the tremendous news of his son's resuscitation to Lord John Daw, and prepare the old man for the momentous meeting.

He called a consultation with his brother physicians, and found, as he had confidently expected to find, that they all coincided with him in opinion as to the expediency of immediately announcing the news of Mr. John Daw's resuscitation and recovery to his father, for that

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now it would be even safe and desirable to have the convalescent sent to his own home.

That afternoon Dr. Hamilton went to The Hill and requested an interview with Lord John Daw.

As soon as he found himself alone with the old nobleman he began to prepare the way for his revelation by saying:

"I grieve to hear that you made a very sad discovery at the cemetery yesterday."

"Yes, a heart-rending crime has been committed, which I only live to punish!" passionately exclaimed the old man.

"Are you quite sure that there was a robbery?" gently inquired the doctor.

"Quite sure? Why, sir, I saw it! The casket had been opened, the jewel stolen, and its place filled with earth and stone! Sure? Yes, as sure as that I shall bring those atrocious scoundrels to the State prison if it should cost my whole living!" exclaimed the old lord, bringing his fist forcibly upon the table.

"My lord," said Dr. Hamilton, in a grave and gentle tone, "I hope you will bear with me while I assure you that I do not believe any harm has been done."

"No harm done! Do you take me for a child, or a fool, Hamilton, that you talk to me in this way?" irascibly inquired the old lord.

"I begged you to be patient while I spoke—"

"You wrote on your card that you came to see me on business connected with that robbery. Now, then, Doctor, have you found out anything?"

"Yes, my lord, I think so. I think I can tell you where you may find your son's body as whole and as sound and in as good a state of preservation as when it was first laid in the casket."

"Eh? What? Is that true? My dear son's sacred

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remains are unmutilated, intact, and may be recovered? Oh, Doctor, is that really so?" demanded the old gentleman, in great agitation.

"That is really true. And now, my lord, I am obliged to put to the test your lordship's trust in me and your love for your son."

"What in the deuce do you mean, Hamilton?"

"Whether love is stronger than pride. Whether, for the sake of having your son's body returned this evening, you will deny yourself the gratification of pride and vengeance and let the mistaken men who opened the casket go free, since they really have not hurt a hair of the young man's head," said Dr. Hamilton, persuasively.

"I—I—I—would like to hang them all!" blowed the old lord, pulling out his pocket-handkerchief and wiping his red face and silvery head.

"I am sorry to hear you say so, my lord, for I have this to tell you—that the men who have possession will restore the body intact whether you pardon or prosecute them. They will do their duty," gravely replied the doctor.

"I would like to know," sarcastically observed the old man, returning and throwing himself into his chair, "what powerful influence has been brought to bear upon the gentlemen of the body-snatching profession to induce them, after they had robbed the vault, to voluntarily offer to restore their booty unconditionally."

"Can you not imagine, Lord John Daw, some circumstances under which an autopsy might be arrested at the first incision of the scalpel?"

"No, I can't! I have no imagination at all!"

"Then I must help you by mentioning some instances in history and in cotemporary times. You recollect a very recent case of a young girl dying, or appearing to die, under such strange circumstances that a *post-mortem*

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examination was ordered to be made on the morning after the death, or the apparent death, and—"

"Yes, I remember; she was Dr. Geddis's patient; and when the doctors went to dissect the body they found the pulse beating feebly, and they brought her round by the electric battery!" eagerly exclaimed the old lord, gazing with devouring interest and anxiety into the face of the speaker and breathlessly waiting for—he knew not what revelation.

"And the girl lived to marry and bear two children," added the doctor.

"Yes, yes, oh, my head! yes; but what do you mean? Great Heaven! What? what? Oh! man, speak plainly, for the love of mercy, speak plainly!" cried the old lord, shaken almost to the verge of dissolution.

The doctor stepped quickly to a side-table on which were decanters of wine and glasses. He filled a glass with strong old port and brought it to the old lord, saying:

"Drink this; and now, while you do so, I will tell you that I have spoken very plainly and intelligibly to you, and your lordship understands that your son's case is like the one I have mentioned—a case of resuscitation after supposed death. Yes, my lord, the first touch of the surgeon's knife drew a little blood and revealed the fact to all the group gathered around the body."

But for the good old port wine he had swallowed, and which sent a warm, strong glow throughout his failing frame, Lord John Daw must have succumbed to his emotions and dropped to the floor, so terribly was he shaken.

"*Is* it true? Oh, Heaven, do not mislead or deceive me! Can it be true? My son not dead after all!"

"It is absolutely true. You may prove the truth for yourself before the sun sets.

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The old lord sank back in his chair gasping for breath.

Dr. Hamilton poured out a second glass of port wine and persuaded the old man to drink it.

"*Where* is he now? *How* is he now?" demanded Lord John Daw.

"He is at the house of Dr. Morris, on the Navy Yard Hill, to which he was conveyed as soon as it was ascertained that he was alive. He has received the best possible treatment, and is now in a fair way of recovery."

"Thank Heaven! Oh, thank Heaven! My son! my son! my dear son! living! recovering! Oh, what joy! We will go to him at once!" exclaimed Lord John Daw, rising and ringing the bell.

A servant quickly responded.

"Have the carriage at the door as soon as possible," said his lordship.

The servant bowed and withdrew.

"Tell me, how long has my son been lying ill at Dr. Morris's?"

"Ever since the night after the funeral, when he was first conveyed there."

"Tell me all about the attempted theft—and—the resuscitation!" eagerly demanded the old lord.

The doctor related all the particulars of the attempted *post-mortem* examination, and the completed resuscitation as it is known already to the reader, omitting only the names of those who were concerned in the adventure.

"Why was I not informed of my son's resuscitation when it took place, a fortnight ago?" naturally inquired the old gentleman.

"Because, my lord, we did not expect the resuscitation to reach full recovery, and we thought it would be a most bitter trial for you to see your son as we saw him, living, indeed, but showing no sign of life or conscious-

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ness for days. We gave him the best attention that ever was bestowed on any man, of any rank, before, and now, at the end of two weeks, we have restored him to consciousness and convalescence. Since we have done this, I have lost no time in coming to announce to you the happy result."

"Oh, it is too much !—too—much joy !"

"I must warn your lordship of one thing. Your son does not know, or even suspect, that he was ever supposed to be dead, or ever put into a coffin ; therefore I must beg you not to mention these circumstances in his hearing," said Dr. Hamilton.

"I will not. But how does *he* account for the fact of his being in a strange house ?"

"We told him that he was brought thither while in a state of unconsciousness that he might have deeper quiet, purer air, and more exclusive medical attention than he could possibly gain at home."

"How does he account for my absence from his bedside all this time ?"

"My lord, he does not know that you have been absent. He takes it quite for granted that you have visited him almost daily during the long period of his unconsciousness. And he expects to see your lordship to-morrow."

"To-morrow ! as if I could wait for to-morrow ! My *dear* son ! My dear, noble, generous boy ! Oh, is it possible that you will be so soon, so fully restored to me ! Ah, my whole life's devotion to good work's will scarcely be enough to prove my gratitude to Heaven for this great mercy."

"The carriage is ready, my lord," said the footman, opening the door.

"Very well. Run up to my wardrobe and bring down my black coat."

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The servant bowed and withdrew.

"I hope, under such happy auspices, your lordship may feel disposed to pardon those mistaken men, who, in the interests of medical science and human life, only wished to make an autopsy, and meant to have restored the body to the vault, really uninjured. I hope you will feel disposed to pardon them."

"'Pardon them!' Why, certainly I will pardon them! Nay, indeed, I will reward them! Have they not restored to me my son—my dear son? Man! I could find it in my heart to *love* them!"

"Your coat, my lord," said the servant, re-entering the library.

"Help me on with it *here*, and be quick about it, too!"

The old lord made his hasty toilet in the library, and when it was completed he went down, accompanied by Dr. Hamilton, entered the carriage, and gave the coachman orders to drive to Dr. Morris's, on the Navy Yard Hill.

The horses were started at a good pace.

To say that the old gentleman was deeply moved would but faintly describe his real state.

With all the tender caution that the physician had used in communicating the startling news of the son's resuscitation to the bereaved father, Lord John Daw's mind and body had been shaken almost to the verge of insanity or death.

He leaned back now in the corner of the carriage, quite overcome and occasionally passing his hand over his brow, or pinching his arm as if he had a secret suspicion that he was dreaming.

Then he would suddenly break out with:

"Great Heaven! Can this be true, or—am I going crazy?"

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Dr. Hamilton did not answer him until he himself was directly spoken to.

"Man! Friend! *Am* I happy or only hallucinated?—Are you taking me to my son—my living, breathing son, or are you, perhaps, taking me to a lunatic asylum?"

"Compose yourself, my lord! Do not give way to these fancies! Your lordship knows very well that you are going to see your son, though it may seem difficult, under the circumstances, to realize the fact," replied Dr. Hamilton, in the cool, serene, practical tone that was sure to act as a sedative to the excited nerves of the old man.

The latter sank back in his seat and showed no further sign of agitation except the slight tremor that shook his frame, and the occasional passage of his delicate hand across his brow, until the carriage reached the Navy Yard Hill, and drew up before the handsome house of Dr. Morris.

CHAPTER XVIII.

LIFE AND JOY.

Before they left the carriage, Dr. Hamilton deemed it right to warn Lord John again.

"I understand! I understand! I am not a child!" testily exclaimed the old gentleman, as he slowly and carefully stepped down to the sidewalk.

Dr. Hamilton smiled as he gave Lord John his arm to help him to climb the half a dozen steps that led up to the entrance of the house, and rang the bell.

The door was opened by the factotum of the establishment, a middle-aged colored man named Len, who

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bowed silently as he waved his hand for the visitors to enter.

"Is Dr. Morris in his office now?" inquired Dr. Hamilton, as they passed in.

"No, marse—gone to de City Hospital, sah," replied the negro, with another low bow.

"How is Mr. Daw this afternoon?"

"Oh, a dreat deal better, marster. I hab just took him up a bowl ob strong beef soup, and he hab eat up de whole ob it, marster. Him's in de best ob sperrits, too, 'specting ob his farder to come, and see him; and wen de bell rang just dis minute ago, he tole me to run right down to see who'd come, and if as how it was his farder, to fetch de gentleman right up to his room. Oh, him's a heap better, marster, I tell yer!" answered the loquacious negro, grinning from ear to ear.

"Dear boy! Dear boy!" hastily exclaimed the anxious father, nervously twisting his fingers. "Let us go to him at once—at once, Doctor!"

"Yes, we will go now, for he needs not to be told that you are here. He is evidently expecting you momentarily," replied the doctor, as he drew the old man's arm within his own and helped him to climb the two flights of stairs that led to the upper floor.

There, in a light, cool bedroom filled up with maple wood and white dimity, Lord John found his son lying on a clean, fresh, white bed, his handsome blonde head reposing on a pile of snowy pillows, and his fine though emaciated form lightly covered by a white counterpane.

The large blue eyes—looking preternaturally large from the thinness and pallor of the face—were eagerly turned toward the door as the visitors opened it.

"Is that my father?" inquired the patient, in a weak but excited voice.

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"Yes, my boy! My dear, dear boy, it is I! Oh, thank Heaven! Thank, thank Heaven!" cried the trembling but overjoyed old man, as he tottered towards the bed and sank down beside it to grasp and kiss the hands of his recovered son.

"Sit in the resting-chair beside me, dear father," said the son, feebly trying to raise the old gentleman to his feet—a task far beyond his strength.

"And how do your find yourself this afternoon? Eh, dear lad, tell me!" said Lord John, seating himself on the arm-chair at the bed's head, and turning it around so that he could closely see his son.

"Oh, I am better, so much better? Out of all danger now."

"Thank Heaven! Thank Heaven!" warmly responded the old man.

"I suppose I have been very ill," thoughtfully murmured the invalid.

"Yes, you *have* been very ill. But that is past, and you are all right now, thank Heaven!" fervently exclaimed Lord John.

"Father," murmured his son, with a keen and wistful look, "*are* you really very glad to know that I am better —that I am getting well?"

"Glad! glad! Oh, my dear boy! my dear, dear boy! how can you ask such questions of me—of *me*, who have been quite heart-broken, crushed to the dust by your—"

"HEM?"

The interruption came from Dr. Hamilton, who, standing at one of the white-curtained front windows, cleared his throat with rather a loud sound.

The old man remembered himself and amended his phraseology:

"How can you doubt that I am overjoyed at your recovery, knowing as you must know, that I have been

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reduced to despair by your long and dangerous illness."

"Yes, you really *are* happier to have me restored to you," said the young man, with a penetrating gaze into the aged, grief-worn but now smiling face of his father.

"Ah, my boy! you know it! You know it!" said the old man, in a tone tremulous with deep emotion.

"Strange strength of parental love, for I never was any comfort to you, father," said the invalid, in a pensive voice.

"Don't say that, Jack! You always were my greatest pride and joy in life. For whom have I striven to add riches to riches and honors to honors but for you, my dear son! When you were taken from—ahem!—when you were taken ill and sank into such extreme danger, I was utterly wretched; but now that you are getting well I am so grateful and so happy," fervently declared the old lord.

"That is well, so far, then," murmured the convalescent, with a strange smile.

"And we shall have a pleasant life together, dear boy! As soon as you are well enough we will travel together. This is the finest season in the year for a pleasant tour."

"Yes, my father, and I will try indeed, indeed I will, to be all that a son should be to his father. You shall never have cause to complain of me again," said the young man, with some emotion.

"Dear lad! You never *did* give me cause to complain of you," replied Lord John, with a happy smile.

"My father," now inquired the young man, with wistful earnestness, "look at me well! Has not my illness made a very great change in me?"

Lord John drew his glasses from his pocket, put them on and bent over his son to scrutinize his face, and then said:

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"Dear boy, you know that my sight is not very good; but, no, I do not think your illness has changed you as much as it might have been expected to do. You are paler and thinner, of course, and the white light on your forehead—the family mark, which is not a blemish, but a beauty—is whiter than ever. That is all the change I notice, lad, but my sight is not very good, you know."

"My father, you *do* look happy," gravely and almost sadly remarked the young man, as he gazed fixedly on the worn but beaming face of the old lord.

"I *am* happy, my dear son, very happy."

"And my recovery has made you so?"

"Of course, dear fellow, nothing else could have satisfied me, and it has, oh! infinitely more than satisfied me. It has raised me from purgatory to paradise."

"Oh, thank Heaven—What have I said?—I mean that I am very glad that you are happy, and I hope—oh! I hope that I may be able always to please you," said the young man, with a sigh of relief, as he closed his eyes and sank into the silence of weariness.

A sign from Dr. Hamilton, who was still sitting near the window, caused Lord John to rise silently and glide over to him.

"My lord," respectfully whispered the physician, "I think that your interview with your son has lasted long enough, for his benefit. You should leave him to sleep, if he can, for the rest of the evening."

"I will do so, unless he himself should wish to talk with me. I shall send my carriage and horses to the livery, and remain here with him, however, until I can take him home. I can sleep on that sofa, and keep out of his sight when it is best for him that I should do so; but I will not leave the premises until I can take him with me," said the old lord, with a touch of his natural obstinacy.

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"As your lordship pleases; but you will find the plan a very fatiguing one."

"Sir! I shall find in it the very elixir of life! But, hark ye, Doctor! Has—has—*his* wife been to see him?" questioned Lord John, dropping his voice to the lowest whisper.

"His wife? No, my lord, of course not! She does not even know of his resuscitation. *You* were the first and only one outside the family informed of it."

"Ah, yes; to be sure. But has he inquired for her?"

"No, my lord; not yet. Remember that only this morning he recovered his consciousness."

"Yes, yes; I see. Doctor, how long do you think it may be before I can take him home?"

"Three days from this, if he should continue to improve, you might do so; but it would be safer to leave him here for a week."

"Then he shall stay here a week longer, if Dr. Morris will give us both house-room, for I will not run the slightest risk of his health in removing him," said the old man, firmly.

While he spoke there was a sound of wheels rolling up and stopping before the house.

Lord John looked out of the window, and saw Dr. Morris just getting out of his gig.

"Morris has come. I will go down to the office and speak to him," said the old man leaving the room for the purpose.

At the foot of the second fall of stairs he found the doctor handing his hat and cane to the man-servant, and drawing off his gloves.

"Any one been to see me while I was out, Len?" he inquired.

"No, Marse Doctor; not a soul," replied the negro.

"But, Morris, here am I waiting for you, all the same,

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If you are not too tired, will you give me an interview in your office?" inquired Lord John, as he descended the lowest step.

"Certainly, certainly, my lord, with great pleasure. Pray walk in and take a chair," replied the doctor, while black Len officiously opened the office door on the right of the hall, and stood bowing and holding it open.

The two gentlemen talked together over the condition and prospects of the invalid up stairs; and an arrangement was made by which the old lord was to remain an inmate of the house until such time as he should be able to take his son home to The Hill.

"And then, when people hear what has happened, there will be a town talk, and I hate a town talk!" said the old gentleman, for the first time recollecting that necessary attendant of his son's restoration.

"Well, my lord, I think we can stand it under the circumstances; and all we need to say to the public in explanation is, that in attempting an autopsy signs of life were discovered and resuscitation was effected. We are not *obliged* to give even that much explanation," said Dr. Morris, with a smile, as they separated—the doctor to make some calls on very sick patients, and the old lord to resume his watch by his son, in whose room he had a bed made up that night, and with whom he stayed for five days, at the end of which Mr. Daw was pronounced well enough to ride in an easy carriage, and Lord John took his recovered treasure home to The Hill.

He was right in his previsions—the resuscitation of his heir was the sensation of the day—almost the only theme of conversation in the city.

Lord John had fully intended to inform his daughter-in-law and her family of the strange restoration of his son; but he wished to do this in person, and as he could not, upon any pretext whatever, leave his beloved inva-

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lid while they remained at the Navy Yard, he put off this obvious duty until they were settled again at The Hill.

He noticed that his son had never mentioned the name of Eldiva or of any of the family at Shadow Hall, and he wondered at the omission, yet on his own part refrained from introducing the subject until they had been at home nearly a week, and Mr. Daw had grown so much better as to be able to walk a short distance about the grounds.

Then, as the father and son sat together in an arbor, one fine October afternoon, Lord John said;

"My dear boy, would you not like to see—your wife?"

The young man started violently and turned deadly pale.

"You were fully reconciled to her, you know, my boy," added the old lord, whose half-blind eyes had failed to detect the signs of agitation on his son.

The young man, trembling, made no reply.

"And so it seems to me she ought to be informed of your resusci—convalescence," continued Lord John, catching himself up where he had nearly tripped.

Still the invalid remained silent.

"Shall I go myself and bring her to you?" inquired the old lord.

This seemed to rouse the young gentleman, for he hurriedly exclaimed:

"Oh, no! not that! Heaven of Heavens! not that!"

The old lord grew very much alarmed.

"My *dear* boy!" he said, "do not excite yourself! You'll be ill again! You need not see your wife if you do not wish to—"

"No, no, not—not yet!' exclaimed the young man, nervously.

"You shall not see any one until you are ready to do

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so," said the old lord, soothingly, and the subject was dropped.

So it happened that the first news of the resuscitation of Lord John Daw's son reached the family at Shadow Hall through the newspaper.

It was the middle of October, when the family were seated at breakfast in the gay-pictured dining room. There were present Zora Roslyn, Eldiva Daw, Lance and Nea. Old Biggs was waiting on the table. The talk turned rather sadly on Lance's approaching departure, for the young midshipman's six months' leave was nearly out, and he expected to go to Norfolk to join the man-of-war *Delaware*, bound for the East Indies on November first.

You will be twenty-one by the time we see you again, Lance," said Zora Roslyn, who was almost ready to cry.

"And Nea will be fifteen—almost a young woman," said the youth, assuming a gay tone to divert his sad friends.

"Oh, Lance! remember what you have so often promised me—if I should not live to see you return, be a true brother and kind protector of your poor little step-sister," said Zora, with the irrepressible tears now starting in her eyes.

"Oh, I will, mamma, I will indeed! There is no one in the world I love so well as Nea, and no one else whom I have to care for," said the boy.

"How long will you be gone on this voyage, Lance?" inquired Eldiva.

"Three years, or more, I expect," replied the midshipman.

"Three years is forever," said Nea.

"Oh, no, dearest! I was gone three years on my last voyage, yet I came back to you," said Lance, cheerfully.

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"Oh! but it seemed forever—all my life," complained Nea.

At this moment there came a knock at the front door, and Old Biggs went to see who was there.

He returned in a few minutes and put the *Intelligencer* into the hand of his mistress, saying merely:

"De morning's paper, ma'am."

"Look at it if you wish to, Lance. It is full of the coming November elections, and I don't take any interest in politics," said the lady, passing the paper over to the youth.

Lance received it with a bow, and began to glance over the pages, reading the head lines only until on the third page a paragraph fixed his attention.

In another moment he started, changed color, stared at the lines under his eyes, and finally got up with the paper in his hand and left the table.

"What is the matter, Lance? Where are you going?" inquired Mrs. Roslyn, while Eldiva gazed after him, and Nea listened for his answer.

But the youth had hurried out of the room by the door that led into the old-fashioned garden and there, after a few minutes, Mrs. Roslyn found him seated in the round summer-house, intent upon the article he was reading in the *Intelligencer*.

"Lance," said the lady, sitting down beside him, "what have you found in the newspaper to interest you so deeply?"

"It is—it is—something about the—the—body of Mr. John Daw," faltered the youth, scarcely raising his staring eyes from the paper.

"Oh! have the vault robbers been traced? Is the body found?"

"Yes—no—yes; it has come to life!" exclaimed Lance rather confusedly.

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"*What?*" demanded the perplexed lady.

"It has come to life! Ugh! It is enough to make your hair rise on your head! It has come to life! Read this," said the youth, pointing to the head line which had first attracted his own attention.

Zora Roslyn looked and read:

THE CASE OF MR. JOHN DAW.

REMARKABLE INSTANCE OF RESUSCITATION AFTER SUPPOSED DEATH.

"Lance! Lance! For the love of Heaven, Lance, what does this mean!" demanded the amazed woman.

"Don't you see? It means that he came to life! The doctors were trying to steal a *post-mortem* examination the night immediately after the funeral! They got the body into the keeper's cottage, and then discovered signs of life, and succeeded in resuscitating the man; but he was really very far gone, so that he had been in the hands of the doctors ever since until a few days ago, when his father was informed of the facts and carried his convalescent son home to The Hill. But there! Read for yourself! It will make your hair stand on end, I tell you!"

"But—do you mean to say that John Daw, whose funeral we attended some weeks ago, is—ALIVE?" demanded the astonished woman.

"Alive and at home!"

Zora Roslyn, still agape with wonder, seized the paper and read the article with eager haste.

"I never heard of such a thing in my life?" exclaimed the lady, as, after having finished reading, she continued to stare at the paper. "Yes, I have heard and read of such cases, but I never could have believed in them!"

"What will Diva say? You must get her away some-

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where up stairs and tell her; she won't believe it, though," remarked the young man.

"No," said Zora Roslyn, after a thoughtful pause, "no, I will not tell her yet. This may be a cruel hoax. Keep the paper out of her sight. Hint not a word of what we have just read; but go and harness Peggy to the gig. You must drive me up to The Hill. I must hear the truth from Lord John himself, before I can venture to tell Eldiva anything about it."

Lance, like any other youth of his age, was always ready to drive—anybody, anywhere, at any time, on any terms. He folded up the paper lightly, thrust it into his pocket, and ran out of the garden and through the alley into the stable-yard to harness up, while Zora Roslyn returned to the house and prepared for her expedition.

"What was the matter with Lance!" inquired Eldiva, meeting her on the staircase.

"Oh, a sudden qualm," said Mrs. Roslyn, truthfully, but rather evasively.

"Oh! I thought it was something he saw in the paper; but if Lance *will* eat soft crabs, why—he must take the consequences, that is all?"

And the ladies passed each other on the steps.

Fifteen minutes later, Mrs. Roslyn and Lance were seated side by side in the old gig, and bowling along up New Jersey Avenue on their way to The Hill.

In due time, they turned into the heavily wooded grounds, now glowing in all the richest hues of autumn, and drew up before the handsome massive portico.

"Is Lord John Daw at home?" inquired Mrs. Roslyn of the servant who opened the door to them.

"Yes, ma'am," was the prompt answer of the man, as he took the visitors' cards, showed them into a small reception-room and vanished.

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The two had scarcely time to look around themselves, when the footman returned and asked them to walk up stairs.

They followed their conductor up to a superb drawing-room, upholstered in ebony, white brocade and silver, and there left them.

In a few seconds Lord John Daw entered the room, bowed with old-fashioned courtesy, and then advanced and shook hands cordially with his visitors.

Zora Roslyn was trembling so much that she scarcely dared to trust herself to speak, especially as Lord John had calmly seated himself before her, folded his hands on his knees and seemed waiting patiently for her to open the conversation.

It was useless to try to talk of the weather, or to seem at ease; she felt obliged to plunge at once into the breathless subject.

"Excuse me, dear Lord John, but—have you seen—this morning's *Intelligencer?*" she nervously inquired.

"Yes, my dear madam, I *always* see it," politely replied the old lord, with a slight smile at his visitor's embarrassment, which he perfectly understood.

"There was an article in it—an article—there was an article—"

"About the resuscitation of a man supposed to be dead," added the old gentleman, by way of helping the lady out of her difficulty.

"Yes—yes—yes, sir! Yes, my lord! And—and—was it—was it—"

"Perfectly true? Yes, my dear, distressed soul, it was perfectly true! Now, do not, dear lady, ask me any more questions, for I can tell you no more than you may have read in the paper. Compose yourself and take a glass of wine," said Lord John. And he arose, rang the bell and gave the order to the servant who answered it.

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"I will ask you no questions about the resuscitation, strange as it was; but you will allow me to ask, how is Mr. Daw at this time?" inquired Zora Roslyn.

"He is convalescent, but he is still in an extremely weak, nervous, and excitable state. We have to keep him very quiet still."

"Eldiva does not yet know of her husband's restoration to life," said Mrs. Roslyn, somewhat reproachfully.

"*You* did not know it five minutes ago," smiled Lord John.

"And had to receive the first intimation of the fact from the public paper," said Mrs. Roslyn, rather accusatively.

"My dear ma'am, I have been longing to communicate the good news to you for days, but had no opportunity of doing it in person, and I did not wish to do it by proxy, or by letter. However, I had determined to call on you this very day. I did not know the account of the affair would be published, as it was given in so late last night," Lord John explained, in an apologetic tone.

Mrs. Roslyn thought his excuse very unsatisfactory, but she bowed, as in politeness bound, and then inquired:

"Has Mr. Daw expressed any wish to see his wife?"

"No, ma'am; he is not equal to expressing anything on the subject. When I proposed to go and bring her to him, he became so agitated that I trembled for the effect upon his life."

"But that is strange; for when he was supposed to be dying he sent for her," exclaimed Zora Roslyn.

"Yes, I know, I know, but now his nervous system is so shattered by the terrible ordeal through which he has passed, and barely come out with his life—that—that—my dear lady, we must have patience with him for a little while longer," said the old lord, taking his visitor's

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hand between both of his own and speaking with kindness and deprecation.

Mrs. Roslyn arose to go, saying:

"I must break this news to Eldiva."

"Who will receive it with what the greatest master of expression calls, aptly,

'A defeated joy,'

I fear; but we must have patience with a nervous invalid, my dear lady," said the old gentleman speaking with such evident sincerity that Zora Roslyn could not suspect him of any secret design to keep the young pair apart.

"Good-by, Lord John," she said; "I hope you will let us know when Mr. Daw is able to see his friends."

"I will do so, dear madam, and hope that the time of separation may be very short," replied the old lord, pressing the hand she had held out to him, and then releasing it.

Lance Roslyn, who had retreated to a bay window, where he had been a distant and almost forgotten witness, now came forward, bowed his adieux to Lord John, and attended his step-mother down to the gig.

"Oh, Lance, how shall I tell Eldiva—first of this strange resuscitation of her husband, and next, his refusal to see her?" inquired Zora Roslyn, as they drove out of the shaded grounds.

"I reckon Diva can stand it. She is strong, and has stood some shocks already," said the boy.

"The *idea* of his refusing to see her!" exclaimed Zora Roslyn, as they reached Delaware Avenue.

"You mustn't blame him! Good Lord! Is not death, burial, and resuscitation in this world enough to disturb the equanimity of any man? The chap has not entirely come to life yet, I reckon!—*Get up Peggy!* Mamma, we will

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have to get a new horse and turn old Peggy out to grass," said the young man, as he touched up Pegassus and started him at a faster pace.

They reached Shadow Hall at noon, and found the house in some commotion.

Nea was the first to meet her mother, who entered the front hall while Lance drove the gig through the side alley to the stables.

"Oh mamma," said the child, "go to Diva! She is walking up and down the floor like a body distracted!"

"What is the matter with her?" inquired Mrs. Roslyn, though she suspected the truth as she hurried up stairs.

"People have been running in here and telling us all that Mr. Daw is alive, and then asking if it was true. And Mrs. Gamble brought in the '*Telligence* and showed her the piece about it. *Is it true?*" inquired the child, as she followed close to her mother's heels.

"Yes, dear; Mr. Daw is living," said Zora, as she reached the head of the stairs and hurried at once to the door of Eldiva's room, which she entered without knocking.

The girl was walking wildly up and down the floor, but she turned on seeing Mrs. Roslyn, and, white and shaking, ran to her and exclaimed:

"Oh, aunt, is this a fact? Is it? Is it?

"Yes, my dear girl, it is."

Eldiva dropped into a chair and sank back.

Do not let this agitate you so much. Such things *have* happened before," continued Mrs. Roslyn.

Eldiva drew a handkerchief from her pocket, and wiped her forehead, drew a deep breath, and inquired:

"How is he?"

"Very much prostrated in body and mind, but still convalescent."

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"Shall I go to him at once? Oh, let me go!" said Eldiva, rising as if to prepare for the drive.

"No, my dear; you must not go to him yet. He is in no condition to see you. You must be patient until he is better," said Zora Roslyn.

"But I must and will go to him! He sent for me when he thought he was dying, and I went and stayed with him until the last. We were fully reconciled *then*, and I must go to him now," said Eldiva, persistently.

"But, my dear, *then*, feeble and failing as his body was, his mind was clear and calm. Now, love, it is not only his body but his mind that is very much affected. And like many another, under such circumstances, he seems to have taken a nervous antipathy to those he loves the best."

"You—you are trying to let me know that *he*—my invalid husband—refuses to see me!" said the young lady, in an excited manner.

"Yes, Eldiva, that is it. But his horrible ordeal has effected his brain temporarily, and he is not morally responsible for what he says or does."

"Oh? I understand it all but too well," bitterly muttered the young wife. "He is restored to life, but not to me!"

"Do not say that, Eldiva! When he is restored to reason he will be restored to you.

"No, Aunt Zora, no! I understand the situation better than any of you do! In his letter of repudiation, written last summer, he told me that we should never meet again on earth, unless at the death-bed of one or the other. He thought he was on his death-bed and he summoned me to his side. I went and we were reunited."

"Never to be parted again, Eldiva."

"But now that he is brought to life he sends me back to my humiliating position of a repudiated wife!"

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"No, no, you must not say so, indeed! It is not just, it is not true," expostulated Mrs. Roslyn.

"We shall see," said Eldiva.

Eldiva was right—they did see. A week passed without any letter, message or visit from The Hill.

The only news they got of Mr. Daw was through Dr. Hamilton.

Zora Roslyn, on the first occasion of her meeting the family physician, reproached him for not having advised her earlier of the restoration of Mr. Daw.

"My dear madam, it was not my secret, but my brethren's of the faculty. I was not at liberty to tell you," the doctor replied.

Every day as he passed Shadow Hall on his way home, he would call to report Mr. Daw's health, which was constantly improving.

One morning Dr. Hamilton brought startling news.

"Lord John and Mr. Daw will sail for Europe on the 1st of November," he announced to Mrs. Roslyn, whom he found alone.

"Dr. Hamilton, you are the mutual friend and family physician of the Daws and ourselves. Now *do* you not think it is very hard and very strange that Mr. Daw should persist in refusing to see his wife—his most innocent and unoffending wife?"

"Madam," said the doctor, taking her hand and meeting her eyes with gentle gravity, "I am, as you say, Mr. Daw's family physician, but not his father confessor. I am not, therefore, in his confidence. But this I will say to you, that his illness has left his brain and nervous system in so abnormal a condition that you need not be surprised at this eccentricity of action," said the doctor, as he arose to take leave.

"But will Mr. Daw actually leave the country without seeing his wife?" anxiously inquired the lady.

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"I do not know, madam. Let us hope that he will not. Good morning, madam," said the doctor as he left the room.

"Can it be possible that Mr. Daw will leave the country without meeting his wife?" muttered Zora Roslyn to herself. "Surely not! We will wait and hope."

CHAPTER XIX.

A STRANGE SCENE.

As soon as Dr. Hamilton had left the house Mrs. Roslyn went up stairs to see Eldiva.

She found the young girl in the front bed-chamber, seated before a small wood fire that the chill air of the late October day made very welcome. Eldiva still wore her widow's weeds, and looked very pretty in her simple black dress and white mob cap.

"Diva, dear, I think you should leave off that useless mourning now! I can't think why you continue to wear it," said the lady, as she drew up another chair and sat down beside her niece.

"Mourning is always useless, for that matter, Aunt Zora; but I have as much reason to wear it now as ever I had. My husband is still dead—*to me*," gravely replied the girl.

"Nonsense, Eldiva! the man is weakened in mind as well as in body! as often happens to a patient who has a severe typhoid fever."

"Did he have typhoid fever?"

"The doctors say that immediately after his resuscitation he passed into a typhoid condition; and you know, as I told you before, that the deadly fever often leaves its victims—if they recover at all—for months in a low

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state of mind as well as body. And this accounts for Mr. Daw's apparent neglect of you."

"Well, Aunt Zora, as soon as he sends for me I will put off my mourning," said the young lady, with a sad smile.

"I think he will send for you very soon, for he is about to travel for his health," observed Mrs. Roslyn.

Eldiva made no reply.

"You do not ask where he is going?" said the lady.

"It is no affair of mine," replied the girl.

"But he is going on a sea-voyage—he is going to Europe," said Mrs. Roslyn.

"It is nothing to me, Aunt Zora. John Daw is dead to me. I think of him only in that last, loving, sorrowful farewell at his death-bed—as we supposed it to be," said the young lady, in a tone of calm despair.

"I am sure that he will not go away without taking leave of you, Eldiva," said the elder lady.

Even as she spoke a carriage was heard to drive up and stop before the door, and presently a loud knock resounded through the hall.

Mrs. Roslyn got up and went to the window to look out.

"It is Lord John Daw's chariot! I am sure he brings news of some sort!" she hurriedly exclaimed.

Eldiva looked up with revived interest.

A moment after, Old Biggs came into the room with a card on a small tray, and took it to Eldiva.

"Whom did his lordship ask to see?" inquired the young girl, in an agitated voice.

"*You*, Miss—ma'am, I mean—w'ich were the reason w'y I handed of the card."

"Tell his lordship that I will be down immediately," said Eldiva.

"There! I said he had come with news! And now

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I know he has, or he wouldn't have asked for *you*, particularly. Go down at once, my dear, urged Mrs. Roslyn.

And, in fact, Eldiva lost no time, but hurried down to the drawing-room, where she found the old gentleman walking up and down the floor with his hands clasped behind him.

He turned as she entered, and advanced to meet her.

"Ah, my dear little daughter, I am so glad to see you!" he exclaimed, with a beaming smile, as he folded her to his heart and kissed her.

"I am glad to see you looking in such good health and spirits, my lord," she said, warmly responding to his affection.

"Ah! why should I not be well and happy, when my dear boy is given back to me!" exclaimed the old man.

"I hope—he is—getting better," said Eldiva, feeling obliged to say something.

"Yes; and he will get well, but slowly, slowly, my dear. And the doctor has ordered a sea-voyage as the best thing for him—"

"Excuse me; you are standing all this time. Pray, take a chair, Lord John," said Eldiva, to mask her own trembling anxiety.

"No, thank you, my dear; I have not time to stay. I came to take you up to the Hall to see your husband. He must see you and bid you good-by before he leaves the city," explained Lord John.

"Did he—did he—ask to see me?"

"Of course he did, my dear child. And I came to fetch you. *He* would have come, but the doctors would not let him stir until he starts on his journey. They say he must save all his strength for that."

"It has been some days since he was pronounced convalescent. Why has he not sent for me before this?" gravely inquired the young wife.

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"My dear, have you not heard? His mind has been unsound ever since his return to consciousness—a frequent effect of typhoid fever; but it will pass off. He is wild to see you now. Go, love, and get ready as quickly as you can, and I will wait here for you," said the old gentleman, leading her to the door and handing her out, as if he took it for granted that she would go with him.

Eldiva ran up stairs to her own room, where Mrs. Roslyn was anxiously expecting her.

"Well, what news?" inquired Zora.

"Lord John and Mr. Daw are going to Europe. Mr. Daw has sent for me to bid him good-by. He is as yet too weak to come to me," said Eldiva, as she hastened to a closet and took out her bonnet and shawl.

"I should think if he were too weak to come here, he would be too weak to go to Europe," said Zora.

"He is saving his strength, by the doctors' orders," said Eldiva, as she put on her bonnet.

"Widow's crape! For goodness' sake, Diva, don't wear *that* when you are going to see your sick husband!" exclaimed Mrs. Roslyn.

"Oh! I—in my hurry, I forgot. I must run up to the garret and get out one of my colored bonnets that were packed away when I went into mourning."

She flew out of the room and up the attic steps, and, after a few minutes, came down again with her black dress changed for a garnet-colored silk suit, a garnet-colored velvet hat, and cream-colored kid gloves, and a rich India shawl.

"Ah! thank Heaven! Now you look a little more like life!" exclaimed Mrs. Roslyn, as she impulsively kissed her niece, and sent her down to meet her father-in-law.

"Ah, my little daughter, now you look like yourself!"

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smiled Lord John, as he came to meet her, and led her out to the carriage.

"I do not remember ever to have seen you look so happy, my lord," said Eldiva, when they were seated side by side and rolling up New Jersey Avenue toward Capitol Hill.

"I never *have* been so happy, my darling, never! To have an only son, deemed dead, brought back to life, is a joy that no one but he who has it can understand," said the old gentleman, with such a radiant smile that Eldiva felt as glad and thankful on his account as on her own that John Daw had been restored to life.

The horses were driven fast and soon reached The Hill, entered the grounds, passed up the shaded, semi-circular avenue, and drew up before the door.

Lord John alighted with more agility than she had ever seen him show, handed Eldiva from the carriage, then he gave her his arm, and led her up the front steps to the door.

It was opened to his knock by the porter.

"I will myself take you up to John's room and leave you to go in. Your first interview must be a *tete-a-tete*," said Lord John, as he led his daughter-in-law into the house.

She nodded and they went up stairs together to the first floor.

"Here is his room. Go in, my dear," said the old gentleman, as he turned the handle, opened a door and then walked away.

Eldiva entered and found herself, not in the apartment formerly occupied by Mr. John Daw, but in a lofty, spacious chamber upholstered in rosewood and blue damask, and having a deep bay window, which, with two other lofty windows, and the Arabian bedstead, were all draped

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with blue curtains, now drawn closely, and giving a very subdued light.

Coming out of the bright October sunshine into this blue-shaded chamber, Eldiva at first only dimly discerned a fair, pale man in an India dressing-gown, reclining in an easy-chair, within the bay window.

Supposing him to be her husband of course, she advanced towards him.

He arose and came to meet her, holding out his arms.

"My love! my love!" he murmured, as he folded her to his bosom.

She dropped her head upon his shoulder and burst into tears—tears from mingled sources of joy, grief and fear of—she knew not what.

He drew her gently to a sofa, placed her on it, sat down beside her, put his arm around her waist and drew her close to his side, murmuring:

"Dearest, dear Eldiva, how I wish that you would go with me abroad!"

"And why can I not, John?" she asked, amid her choking sobs, as once more she dropped her head upon his shoulder.

"Ah, love! the doctors will not let me take you. They declare that I must go to sea and that I must have perfect quiet on the voyage. They urge that the presence of my wife on one of those uncomfortable merchant and passenger ships would only add to my care and anxiety, and so, my dear, they are as firm as fate in denying me the solace of your company; so we must be patient," said the young man, in a soothing tone, as he held her close to his heart and pressed repeated kisses on her lips

"When do you go?" she inquired, sadly.

"The day after to-morrow, dear love."

"Oh, that is very soon!"

"Too soon, my own love, but it cannot be helped," he

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sighed, and while he spoke he never ceased to caress and kiss her.

"Oh, how long will you be gone?" was her next plaintive question.

"Eight months at the very longest. If we should be so fortunate as to have good weather and quick voyages, not so long as that. And when I return, dear love, I hope—I hope that we shall meet never, never, to part again.

"Oh, I hope so! I hope so! It seems to me that there is nothing in the world worth separating for, unless it be, as in this case, a matter of life or death! I shall live on the hope of your return," she said, as she raised her head from his shoulder and wiped her eyes. The light was clearer now, or her sight had become more accustomed to the soft shadows of the beautiful room, for she could see objects clearly.

"You love me, then? You *do* love me!" he exclaimed, catching and straining her passionately to his bosom, and pressing ardent kisses on her lips and brow.

Something in his manner or tone or look caused her suddenly to push him from her and gaze into his face until her eyes became dilated as by surprise or horror, and her gaze became a fixed stare.

"What is the matter with you, dearest love? What do you see?" he inquired, in rather a low and faltering tone, as he once more attempted to draw her to his bosom.

But she pushed him back, started up and covered her face with her hands, muttering:

"Am I dreaming? Am I dreaming or have I suddenly gone crazy?"

"Eldiva, dearest love," began the young man.

She dropped her hands and stared at him fixedly again.

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He arose and approached her, holding out his arms imploringly.

"No! no! For Heaven's sake, no!" she cried, lifting her hands to ward off his approach.

"If you *knew* how I loved you!" he pleaded, still holding out his arms, but not attempting to draw a step nearer to her.

"Be silent, for *mercy's* sake! Have you not done me harm enough?—harm enough, great Heaven!—but that you should—"

"Eldiva! pardon me! Pardon a man driven to desperation by love for you!" he pleaded, clasping his hands and dropping his head upon his chest, but advancing no step nearer to her.

"Be silent, I say! I do not know how I bear this—why I do not swoon, or die, or go mad! It is enough to make me do either!"

The young man sank back to his seat on the sofa, and dropped his arms to his sides. He was deadly pale, but she did not perceive it, for she scarcely looked at him as she continued pitilessly:

"No, I do not know how I can bear this, unless it is because I have been lately inured to severe shocks, and have been partly prepared for this by feeling a sort of unreality in all that has befallen me lately."

"Eldiva!" he cried, in an impassioned tone, "I ask not this for my own sake, but for my father's—for Lord John Daw's sake—do not denounce me to him. It would break his heart! He is now so happy! In mercy to him forbear to expose me!"

The young lady paused thoughtfully for a few moments, and then answered, gravely:

"If you can satisfy me upon *one* vital point."

"I will do so if I can. What is it?"

She stooped and whispered a very grave question.

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He whispered back his reply, and then, in a weak voice, added :

"And now in mercy to *him*, you will keep my secret?"

She answered solemnly, looking into his haggard face :

"In mercy to him, I will keep your secret while he lives ; but in justice to others, I will reveal it when he dies."

"Thank you ! Bless you, Eldiva ! Bless—" his voice altered.

She looked at him quickly, and uttered a slight cry, for his head had sunk upon his chest, his eyes closed, and his face faded to a deathly pallor.

She flew to him and took his hand, but it was limp within her own. She felt his pulse, but it had ceased to beat.

Wild with alarm she flew to the bell and rang it quickly.

Lord John Daw was not far off, as may be readily supposed. He entered the room before any servant could answer the bell.

"What is the matter, my love?" he inquired, in some trepidation, as he hurried towards Eldiva, who was then trying to arrange the swooning patient into an easier position.

"He has fainted, my lord, he has fainted !" replied the young lady.

"Ah ! Heaven ! the interview was too much for him ! I feared it would be, in his state !" exclaimed Lord John, first taking his son's hand and feeling his pulse, and then going to a little stand of medicines, pouring a cordial restorative from a bottle into a little glass, and bringing it to the patient.

At that moment a footman entered in answer to the bell.

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"Go and fetch Dr. Hamilton immediately," said Lord John.

The man bowed and disappeared.

The patient on the sofa opened his eyes wearily.

"Do not speak, John, dear lad. Lie very still for a little while," said the old lord, gently, as he sat by the side of his son and bathed his head.

Eldiva drew a chair to his side and begged to relieve him of his duty, but the old gentleman would not give way.

"No, love, no," he said. "I am accustomed to this sort of thing. Do not be alarmed. The doctors say that he will be subject to these fainting spells for some little while longer; that any excitement may bring them on. That is why they recommend quiet."

While the old man spoke the door opened, and Dr. Hamilton entered the room. He had not seen the messenger just sent to summon him in haste. He had just happened to arrive then on his usual afternoon visit.

"He has had another ill turn, Doctor," said Lord John.

"Ah! I see. Some undue agitation. We must guard against that sort of thing," replied the physician, as he approached the sofa and bowed to the lady and gentleman seated near.

Eldiva arose and made way for the doctor to approach his patient.

But, as she did so, the latter slightly beckoned her to stoop down and listen to him; and when she did so, he said:

"Bid me good-by now and go."

"Good-by," she said, stooping very low to add, in a whisper: "For his sake I will keep your secret as long as he lives, but no longer."

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The father and the physician both thought that she had kissed him, but they were mistaken, of course.

"He will do well," said Dr. Hamilton, after a very brief examination. "This is but a very slight attack; but we must avoid its repetition."

Meanwhile, Eldiva had put on her hat and shawl and was now drawing on her gloves.

"Will your lordship be so kind as to order the carriage for me?" she said.

Lord John arose and rang the bell, and then said:

"My dear, I am very sorry for all this. But have fortitude and patience. The sea voyage will restore him, and I will bring him back to you in full health of body and mind, and you will both 'live happy ever after,' as the fairy stories say."

A footman entered in answer to the bell and saved Eldiva the embarrassment of having to reply.

"Have the carriage brought around to the door for Mrs. John Daw," said Lord John.

When Eldiva reached home, Mrs. Roslyn flew down the stairs and met her in the front hall.

"Well!" she exclaimed, anxiously—"well!"

"Let us go up stairs, auntie, before we talk," replied the girl.

"You look awfully pale and wild, Eldiva. What has happened?" anxiously demanded Zora Roslyn, when they had reached the upper chamber and the girl had thrown off her bonnet and shawl, tossed them on the bed, and cast herself into an arm-chair.

"I have had an agitating interview," she answered, nervously jerking at her gloves until she had pulled them off.

"So I suppose. But I hope it was a full reconciliation."

"It can scarcely be called a reconciliation, since there had been no recent quarrel."

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"Yes, but there certainly was a misunderstanding," persisted the elder lady, drawing a chair to the side of her niece and seating herself.

"Yes, there was a misunderstanding," assented Eldiva.

"And—is that set right?"

"We understand each other perfectly now, dear Aunt Zora," replied the girl, in a much gentler tone, and feeling conscious that she had been curt in her previous replies.

"That is well, my love. Now tell me all about it. How is this to end? I had fully expected that you would have remained at The Hill and sent for your wardrobe. Perhaps you have come back to pack it, however. Now tell me all my dear. Is he really going alone, or are you to get ready in a hurry to go with him?"

"He is really going alone, auntie, and I have bidden him a final good-by," said Eldiva, firmly.

"Well, I do think his behavior altogether is the very strangest I ever heard of in all my life! I do think the man must be a little—touched in his brain."

"Dr. Hamilton has a theory of his case, which he will no doubt give you. I refer you to Dr. Hamilton. And, *dear* Aunt Zora, as this subject is inexpressibly painful to me, I beg you *never, never* to speak of it in my hearing again. Talk to Lord John, if you like, when he comes to bid you good-by, or to Dr. Hamilton at any time; but *never*, I implore you, to me," said Eldiva, suddenly losing all her wonderful self-control and bursting into a paroxysm of tears and sobs.

"I will not, love, since it hurts you so. And no wonder that it does, poor, dear child!" replied the lady, tenderly.

"Aunt Zora," said the girl, as soon as she could speak again, "I think if you can spare me, I would like to go

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away somewhere. I cannot bear the thought of staying here in this city."

"Dear child, that is natural enough. And though I should miss you very much, I would have you go wherever you would feel happier. Where would you like to go?"

"Oh! I don't quite know. Any where away from the city. Down to some of our relations in St. Mary's."

"To Bloomfield?"

"Yes, that is the best place, Aunt Zora, and I wish to go as soon as possible."

"Lance leaves us on Saturday to join his ship at Norfolk. You will stay to see him off, Eldiva?"

"Oh! yes; that will not be long. Everybody is going away on Saturday, it seems. That is the day Lord John and his party go."

"Very well, dear; then, if you please, you shall go on the Monday following. Will that suit you?"

"Oh! yes," said the girl, wearily, as she arose and threw herself upon the bed, with an air of exhaustion.

"That is right. Rest yourself. Do not come down to supper. I will send you up a cup of tea and a piece of toast, or anything else you like," said Zora Roslyn, rising to leave the room.

"That will do. Send nothing else," sighed Eldiva, throwing her arms up on the pillow.

Mrs. Roslyn went down stairs.

And when Eldiva had drank the cup of tea brought up by Aunt Apple she undressed and went to bed.

The next morning Eldiva appeared at the breakfast pale, worn, anxious and—wearing her widow's dress and cap.

Zora Roslyn opened her eyes in astonishment, but made no comment.

Lance, who had seen his cousin in no other dress for the last six weeks, and who was as indifferent on the

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subject as young men usually are, did not think anything about it.

And little blind Nea did not even see it.

Zora Roslyn thought her niece was about as eccentric as that niece's half crazy husband; but as the subject had been tabooed she forbore to express this opinion. In the course of the day Lord John Daw called to bid the family good-by.

Every member of the little circle went down into the drawing-room to see him, and he spoke to all with the warmth of friendliness inspired by his present happiness; but he called his daughter-in-law to sit by him on the sofa.

Observing her black dress and widow's cap with surprise, he exclaimed:

"Why, my dear, have you not left off those?"

"Because—I am still a widow, if not in fact, certainly in fate," gravely and gently replied the young creature, adding—"I shall wear mourning until your return."

This implied compliment to himself and his son seemed to please the old lord very much.

"You dear, good child, this is hard for you to bear," he said; "but take courage do not mope, but go out and enjoy yourself and look forward to a happy meeting next summer!"

Then there were more last words to be said, promises to be given and received of writing by every transatlantic mail.

And finally the old gentleman folded his daughter-in-law to his bosom, kissed her on both cheeks, shook hands with all the rest of the family, and went away.

As soon as he was gone Zora Roslyn hurried off to finish packing Lance's sea chest.

The next morning Lance took leave of all his friends —Nea was weeping—and started for Norfolk in the

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schooner *Pigeon Wing* to join his ship, the frigate *Sea Horse*, bound for the coast of Africa.

Zora Roslyn did a wise thing. She let her little daughter exhaust her first paroxysm of agonizing sobs and tears, and then when the child had become quiet, she took her up to the city to visit the Female Orphan Asylum, and show her the meek little motherless girls there, whose state would be sure to touch the heart of little Nea and make her forget to cry over her own woes.

In the meantime Eldiva did a strange thing.

As soon as Zora Roslyn and Nea had walked away from the front door Eldiva went into the house, called Gad, the waiter, and ordered him to put Peggy to the cariole, and get himself ready to drive. Then she dressed herself in her full mourning, and when the cariole was ready she went down, took her seat in it, and ordered the boy to drive over the bridge to the nearest florist's.

He drove to Boyce's where Eldiva purchased a number of hardy roses and shrubs that would live out doors all winter, and took them into the cariole with her.

"Drive to the Congressional Burying Ground," she said, as she again took her seat. (They didn't call them "cemeteries" in those days.)

Gad nodded, and started his horse at a good pace, and soon reached the great gate of the government graveyard.

Here she ordered Gad to draw up, get down and fasten the horse.

Then she alighted and went alone into the grounds.

One of the gardeners was at work raking up the fallen leaves with which the grass was strewn.

"Can you show me the grave of old Mr. Hugh Condit, the father of the late keeper?" she inquired of this man.

He stopped raking, scratched his head under his hat,

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and finally answered that he knew nothing about it, but mayhap the new keeper did.

"Where is the new keeper?"

The man pointed to the cottage, and resumed his work.

Eldiva went up to the door, and finding it open walked in, and found herself in the office, where, at a desk, sat a dark-complexioned, hunchbacked man.

"Are you the keeper of this place?" inquired Eldiva.

"Yes madam," said the hunchback, looking up.

"Can you show me the grave of Hugh Condit?"

"You mean Jonas Condit, the man who was here before me, do you not?"

"No; his father, Hugh."

"I can find it by reference to the books, I suppose. I haven't been here long, and don't know much about the sites; but if you will take a seat, ma'am, I will look."

Eldiva sat down, and the keeper opened a large folio that lay before him, and turned over its leaves until he had found what was wanted. Then he arose, and said:

"I will show you the place, ma'am."

He took down his hat from its peg by the desk, and went out, followed by Eldiva.

He led the way down the main avenue, flanked each side by the uniform monuments of members of Congress, and other government officers who had died in Washington, and then he struck off to the left, and reached, through a by-path, a green hill on the east side, in full view of the Anacostia River, and in which there was one little lot fenced in with a paling painted black with white tips.

The keeper opened the little gate and allowed the lady to pass in.

There were two graves within the inclosure. The headstone of one was old, and green and gray with

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mould, and bore the name of Hugh Condit, with the date of his birth, and that of his death, which had taken place several years before.

The headstone of the other was new, white and smooth, and bore the name of Jonas Condit, with the date of his birth, and that of his death, which occurred within the current month.

Yet both graves looked equally fresh.

The keeper observed this with some surprise, and even commented on it, saying, however, in explanation:

"I suppose when they sodded the young man's grave they must have filled up and sodded the old un's, else it would never look so fresh."

"Will you kindly do me a favor?" inquired Eldiva.

"Anything in the world I can do, ma'am, is at your service," replied the hunchback.

"Thank you very much; will you be so good, then, as to go to the gate and tell my servant, whom you will find there, to fetch the flowers from the carriage to this place? And will you lend me some gardening tools, as I wish to plant some roses and shrubs here?"

"Certainly, ma'am, with the greatest of pleasure," said the hunchback, starting off immediately on his errand.

As soon as he was gone, Eldiva threw herself down upon Hugh Condit's grave and gave way to a violent storm of grief.

She had scarcely recovered from it when the keeper returned with his arms full of roses, followed by Gad, loaded down with a similar burden, and carrying a pick and shovel on his shoulder.

"It is a rare good time to plant out roses at this season, when the sap is going down into the roots of the bushes and the November rains soon coming on," said the hunchback, as he laid his treasures on the grass.

Eldiva marked out the spots where she wished to have

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the holes dug, and, as each was hollowed out, she planted with her own hands a rose-bush or a shrub until the little, bare lot looked like a parterre of flowers.

Then again she thanked the keeper, who invited her into his office that she might wash her hands.

And, after this cleansing, she bade the hunchback good-day, called Gad, re-entered the cariole, and was driven back to Shadow Hall.

Mrs. Roslyn and Nea had not yet returned.

Eldiva went to her room, exchanged her carriage-dress for a wrapper, and lay down to rest.

An hour later Zora and Nea came home. Mrs. Roslyn immediately hurried up to Eldiva's room, and exclaimed:

"Well, they have gone!"

"Do you mean Lord John Daw and his party?'

"Of course. Who else should I mean? I met Richard Daly. He told me they left by the early stage for Baltimore on their way to New York, from which port they will sail. Their party filled the inside of one coach."

"I hope they will have a pleasant voyage," said Eldiva. Mrs. Roslyn stared at the girl, wondering at her calmness, and then went away to take off her bonnet.

On the following Monday, Eldiva, attended by Lymp, as lady's maid, embarked on board Miles Tawney's schooner, and sailed for St. Mary's county and Bloomfield Farm.

And Zora Roslyn and her little daughter, Nerissa, remained together with only their servants at Shadow Hall.

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CHAPTER XX.

RUTH DUNN MYSTIFIED.

It was a fine morning late in October that Ruth Dunn sat sewing in her humble room.

She was sad from many causes, but mostly that she saw so little of her son.

One day late in September, Roderick had come home in great agitation, and, to the anxious questions of his mother, he had answered that Mr. John Daw was very ill, not expected to live, and that Richard Daly had been sent down to St. Mary's to fetch Mrs. John Daw to his bedside.

"Then there will be a death-bed reconciliation between the husband and wife," Ruth had said.

"Yes, that is it," Roderick had replied, shaking with agitation.

Ruth attributed the strong emotion of the young man entirely to his sympathy with the old lord about to be deprived of his heir, and she gloried in the unselfish generosity of her boy.

He did not stay long. His duties at The Hill were heavier than ever, he explained, and he hurried back.

Three days after this he came again, and announced the death of Mr. John Daw. He was less moved now than on his last visit; but Ruth was more so; she wept with pity for the sorely-bereaved father.

"Oh, I take it home to myself," she had said, between her sobs. "I think—if I were to lose *you*, Roderick, what a desert this world would be to me! Oh, my boy, do all you can to serve and cheer and comfort him!"

"I will, dear mother, I will. And—if I cannot come to see you even so often as I have lately done, you will

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not feel lonely or anxious, I hope? You will think of me in attendance upon the sorrowful old man."

"Never mind me, dear Roderick. Do your duty to him. You are living and thriving. That is enough to content me—for the present."

"You were always self-sacrificing, dearest mother. I will write to you often if I cannot come to you," said the young man, as he arose to take leave.

Later on Ruth heard the astounding news that had electrified the whole city—of how the body of John Daw had been stolen from the vault on the night of the funeral, and had been resuscitated by the doctors, who had kept their patient and nursed him secretly while he lay for many days between life and death, waiting until the question should be favorably settled before making known his revival from the grave to his friends.

Ruth had longed to see her son and hear from him full particulars of the truth; for all sorts of contradictory reports were flying through the air; but she had not seen him for weeks; the young man seemed to be too closely kept at work to give him the chance of coming to see his mother. But he had written, and she got letters from him two or three times, always saying that he was well, but very closely engaged.

At length one morning, after an absence of three weeks, he surprised her with a visit. So long had she *starved* for her boy's presence that on seeing him enter her room she sprang up, threw her arms around his neck and kissed him rapturously; then taking a deliberate look at him she turned pale to see how ill he was.

"Roderick! You are killing yourself!" she exclaimed, pushing him gently into her own easy chair—"killing yourself for Lord John, and I won't allow it!"

"Dear mother, I am not the least ill, only pale and thin

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from too close work, and we are going to change all that now," said the young man, with a faint smile.

"Ay, yes; what is it, Roderick? My lord does not think of parting with you?"

"No, indeed. His lordship is quite too fond of me for that. Why, he cannot bear me out of his sight."

"It is the instinct of paternal love. He *feels* that you are his son, although he does not know it," said the lady, thoughtfully.

"I do really believe he does," said Roderick, with a strange smile.

"But what, then, is the nature of this impending change, if it is not the loss of your place?" inquired the lady.

"Something that you will like still less than my loss of place, dear mother, I fear," replied the young man.

"What is it, then? Tell me at once and put me out of suspense," said Ruth Dunn, uneasily.

Lord John Daw is going to take his invalid son to Europe for the young gentleman's health, and he is so very anxious for me to go with him that I do not think he will go without me."

"To Europe—so far away," faltered the mother. "Tell me if the voyage would be of advantage to you. Tell me frankly, Roderick."

"Yes, mother dear, it would be of the very greatest advantage to me, both mentally and materially, for it is not only a sea voyage for health, but a tour of the Eastern Continent at the end of it, for knowledge."

"Then, go, my dear, go! It would be a poor sort of love on my part that would keep you from such prosperity."

He came and put his arm around her, whispering:

"Dear mother, I am not worthy of you. I never was, I will not go on this voyage—if—"

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"Roderick, dear, I *wish* you to go. When do you sail?"

"My lord has resolved too suddenly upon this journey. He wishes to leave Washington for Norfolk on Saturday."

"So soon exclaimed Ruth, in consternation; then quickly correcting herself, she added, cheerfully: "but, after all, under the circumstances, this sudden parting is the best. How long do you expect to be gone?"

"Six months, or eight at the very most."

Ruth Dunn made a rapid calculation, and then said, quite gayly:

"Ah, well, there will be little more than the winter between us. You will be home with the earliest flowers of spring; or at latest, you will come with the roses of summer. You will see me as often as you can before you go?"

"I will see you every night before I go. In fact, I can spend every night here until the day of departure; but I shall have to come late and leave early."

Ruth Dunn's face beamed with joy.

"You will! You will! Oh! that will make the parting at last so much less hard!" she said. "And you came to stay to-night?" she demanded, eagerly.

"Yes, mother dear; to-night, and every night until I go."

"Then I will get tea at once, and we will have a happy evening together," said Ruth blithely, as she arose to replenish the little wood fire that was burning on the hearth, and to fill and put on her tea-kettle.

This was the first of a short season of happy nights the mother and son passed under the same home roof; for Roderick kept his word, and appeared punctually at eight o'clock each evening, and remained until six each morning, taking supper and breakfast with her.

Friday evening was the last he spent with her, for early on Saturday morning, after breakfasting together

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at six o'clock, they parted, with mutual prayers and blessings, and with what fortitude they could command.

It was always Ruth Dunn's plan, when she herself was in trouble, to seek out those who were in greater trouble, and by ministering to the sorrows of others become reconciled to her own.

Roderick had left her a considerable sum of money. This enabled her to take a little leisure and do a little good among her poorer neighbors, who, in this particular autumn, were nearly all suffering more or less from malaria.

It was while engaged in this charity that a piece of good fortune came to Ruth Dunn, and placed her in a position so congenial to her kind and motherly nature as to make her labor a pleasure and her duty happiness.

At the sick-beds of her proteges she often met her own pastor, the Rev. Mr. Moss, who, by this means, became better acquainted with his humble parishioner than he had ever been before.

Some weeks later, when frost had killed malaria, and Ruth's poor patients no longer needed her attentions, and she had resumed her plain needle-work, the lonely woman was seated before her little wood fire with a basket of socks beside her, when she was surprised by a visit from the rector.

He begged that she would not let him hinder her work, and then sat down and told her that he had come to offer her the position of Matron in the Female Orphan Asylum.

The news was so surprising and delightful to Ruth that she could scarcely understand or believe it. But she accepted the situation.

The salary, the rector went on to say, was only one hundred and fifty dollars a year, yet she would have

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board, lodging, washing, and medical attendance included. He finally said :

"Well, my dear Mrs. Dunn, the lady managers will hold a meeting to-morrow morning at the asylum. You know where it is—on H street?"

"Oh, yes, thank you, sir."

"Then if you will be there at ten o'clock, I shall be on hand to present you to the managers. I have already recommended your appointment, and, of course, I was authorized by them to make you this offer," concluded the minister, as he shook hands with Ruth and left the room.

The next morning Ruth Dunn went down to Washington and met the lady managers of the Female Orphan Asylum in their board-room.

She was introduced by the Rev. Mr. Moss, and made so favorable an impression upon the board that she was promptly engaged.

The establishment was a newly organized charity, and consisted first of a matron, a servant of all work, and eighteen little children, whose ages varied from two years to twelve years.

As yet, no teacher had been found for them, though the managers were diligently searching for a competent one.

Ruth Dunn found her position quite as congenial as she had anticipated. She soon regulated her large juvenile household, and in addition to her strictly domestic duties she found time to give the children two hours of instruction in the school-room every morning. This was a voluntary work, until a regular teacher could be engaged.

Ruth soon won the love and confidence of all the children, and she would have been perfectly happy could she only have heard from her son often and regularly ; but

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in those days all mails, and especially ocean mails, were very irregular; and when her Roderick had been gone three months, and the winter was half over, she had received but one letter from him, and that had been mailed on the day of his landing at Liverpool. It had brought the news of the health and well-being of his whole party, and given the General Post Office, London, as the address to which all her letters to him must be sent.

Since that time she had heard no more from Roderick. She attributed all the lack of letters to the uncertainty of the mails, and she waited hopefully for news, and looked forward with joyful anticipation to his return in the summer.

Ah! had Ruth Dunn or her son foreseen the length of time that must elapse before they should meet again they might have hesitated before parting, and then—parted with heavier hearts. But they no more than others, could foresee the future.

Meanwhile Ruth Dunn went on hopefully with her labor of love.

The Board of Managers found great difficulty in securing a suitable teacher.

They wanted a Christian lady for the position; but all their applicants were half educated women.

At last, near the end of March, she received a note from the Lady President of the Board of Managers, saying that a teacher had been secured, and requesting her to have rooms prepared for the young lady's reception by the first of April.

Ruth Dunn gladly went to work to prepare the school-room and bed-chamber for the new occupant.

And punctually on the 1st of April she was summoned to the parlor to receive the teacher, who was brought to the house by one of the lady managers.

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Ruth hurried down and opened the door of the parlor, where she saw—first the lady manager in her black velvet hat and feathers and cashmere shawl, and then a slender little figure in widow's deepest weeds.

Ruth bowed to both.

"Mrs. Dunn," said the lady manager, "I bring you our new teacher. We have drawn a prize in the lottery of life. Let me introduce Mrs. Daw."

The little figure arose and threw aside her vail, and disclosed to Ruth Dunn's astonished eyes the beautiful, pale face of Eldiva.

Life had gone ill at Shadow Hall.

Poor, careless, kind-hearted Zora Roslyn had fallen deeper and deeper into debt.

Zora had sold her one complete silver set to provide the wedding outfit and supper of her niece, Eldiva.

And since that time she had been living on her less valuable personal effects. She had gradually sold off all her odds and ends of silver and of jewelry to pay installments on her most pressing debts, for she could never pay one in full.

This winter, however, she had no expensive visitors, only her saturnine cousin, Neil Carnes, came up from the country, and without "leave or license" settled himself down in the house, and put his sign out on the front door—with the view of practicing law in that locality.

NEIL CARNES, *Attorney at Law*,

however, attracted very few clients—the first one being his cousin and hostess, Zora Roslyn, to whom the presence of a lawyer in the house suggested the making of a will—though what poor Zora had to bequeath beyond the guardianship of her child and a few barren acres of land in Maryland was a mystery.

"Why do you wish to make a will at all? A healthy

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young woman like you in your fresh prime?" demanded Carnes, when she broached the subject to him.

"Oh! I don't know! It may be from a presentiment. I think of death," sighed Zora, seating herself on the second chair near the lawyer's office desk, for the conversation took place in the little front room over the hall, which Carnes had appropriated to his own business.

"You should not think of death at your age, Zora, but of somethiug quite different. You should think of marriage. You want some one to take care of you and cheer you up. Come, Zora, let the will wait for a little while and listen to me," said Carnes, hitching his chair closer to hers.

She opened her blue eyes wide with dismay at the thick-set, bull-necked, bullet-headed, bilious-looking man, with his yellow skin, black hair, and bushy brows, and shuddered.

He saw her shudder and shrink, but he went on with his offer all the same.

"Come, Zora, you know how long and faithfully I have loved you, living a bachelor up to my fortieth year for your sake. Come, now, my dear, will you take me at last?" he said, attempting to put his arms around her waist.

"Cousin Neil," she exclaimed, drawing away, "you have had my answer long long ago."

"Yes, my dear I know! I have had your refusal twice already. When you were a young lady and I a young man I offered you my hand, and you declined it and married Mr. Lovel. I wore the willow for your sake until Mr. Lovel departed this life, when, after a suitable interval, I again offered my hand to have it declined in favor of Mr. Roslyn. Again I wore the willow until my second successful rival passed away, and now at this late day I beg you to reconsider my proposal!"

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"Cousin Neil, please say no more on this subject now. I appreciate all that you have said, and I am really grateful; but I must go away now," said Zora, pleadingly.

"Go, then, my dear. I would not distress you for the world," said Neil Carnes, rising and opening the door for the lady's exit.

He had not gained her formal acceptance of his plausible offer of marriage, yet when she had left the little office he lay back in his chair, shook his heavy form with silent laughter, and then quoted Shakespeare. You will scarcely need to be told the lines that he quoted, beginning with—

"'Was ever woman in this humor wooed?
Was ever woman in this humor won?'"

Then he opened a secret drawer in his desk and drew forth a folded newspaper, worn at the edges and yellow with age. He opened and spread it out on the desk and read a paragraph in the advertising columns as follows:

"NEXT OF KIN.—If the heirs of Fairmount Lovel, Esq., late of Brightwater Park, County of Sussex, England, will communicate with Messrs. Field & Field, Attorneys at Law, Inner Temple, London, East, they will hear something to their advantage."

Again Neil Carnes shook with silent laughter as he muttered to himself:

"Your first husband, my lady, was next of kin to the deceased squire and heir to his large estate, and now your little daughter Nea is the heiress, while you yourself can claim your 'thirds.'"

Here, then, was the key to Neil Carnes' chivalric devotion to the poor widow and her orphan child.

Meanwhile Zora Roslyn, utterly ignorant of the wealth that was waiting for her in England, and entirely unsus-

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picious of the mercenary motives of her suitor, hurried to her room, threw herself down in her arm-chair and indulged in a fit of hysterical sobs and tears.

She could not have told why she cried. There was nothing particular to cry for, except perhaps that her nerves were excited and her impulses contradictory.

She was touched by her cousin Neil's constancy and magnanimity, as she called them ; but she did not love him very much. She longed to be relieved of her cares and burdens and to be sheltered and protected ; but she decidedly did not want to marry any one, least of all her Cousin Neil, whom she had refused in her girlhood and in her first widowhood. Now he had proposed again when, as she said, she was no longer young or fair, or rich, so that the sincerity as well as the constancy of his affections were proved beyond a doubt.

It would be a pity to cast off so faithful and disinterested a lover, even though she might not be able to return his love in full measure.

Ah ! what is the use of going on with this explanation of poor Zora Roslyn's motives and impulses, even if she had any worth analyzing ?

Before the week was out, she had suffered herself to be persuaded into an engagement to become the wife of the saturnine lawyer.

Zora wrote and told the news to her nearest relations in St. Mary's—to old Mr. and Mrs. Wells, and others.

It did not surprise them in the least. They had long known of Neil Carnes' attachment, or former attachment, to his cousin Zora. They had suspected that his removal to the city was upon her account. They told each other, " I said so."

Nor did any of them disapprove of the measure. They believed in marriages between relatives—between people

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who had known each other all their lives instead of between mere acquaintances.

Altogether the marriage was an excellent one, they said; and their minds would be quite relieved on Zora's account.

So they wrote congratulatory letters to Mrs. Roslyn, which somewhat reassured her.

And they came up to the wedding, accompanied by Eldiva, who secretly doubted the good of the marriage, but deferred to the opinion of her elders.

There were some dissentient voices, however; the old servants, when they heard the news, shook their heads and sighed and groaned over it. And little Nea, who was the very last to be told by her mother, received the news with such childish anguish and despair, and wept so grievously, with the tears raining from her darkened eyes, that her mother was tempted to break off her marriage then and there, and would certainly have done so had it not been for the presence of her relatives, who told her that children were always jealous of step-fathers; that this child would soon become reconciled; and in any case, it would, at this stage, be a folly and a scandal to break off the marriage.

The wedding took place on a windy morning in the first week of March, in the front drawing-room of Shadow Hall. It was a very quiet one, with nobody present except the officiating clergyman, the bride and groom, and their nearest relatives.

Immediately after the ceremony the newly wedded pair set out for the North on a short bridal tour, leaving Shadow Hall and little Nea in the care of Mr. and Mrs. Wells and Eldiva.

Eldiva devoted herself to the poor little blind child who felt herself forsaken by all.

One day the young lady took the little girl for a drive,

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calling first at a florist's for some spring flowers growing in pots, and then going on towards the Congressional Burying Ground, as the East Washington Cemetery was then called.

On their way out Eldiva experimented on Nea's sight.

"Try to look at these, Nea," she said, placing a gorgeous red and yellow tulip and an azure hyacinth side by side before her. "Can you see any difference between these?"

"Yes," replied the child slowly. "One looks like fire and flame through a blur—oh! like a little of the sunrise or the sunset—"

"That is the tulip," said Eldiva.

"And the other is like—is like—what I used to see in the deep blue sky right over head in the summer before I went blind—but it is all through a blur."

"That is the hyacinth."

"Yes, I knew it was the hyacinth by the smell. Oh! isn't it a delicious smell?"

When they reached the gate of the "Burying Ground" Eldiva alighted and lifted Nea from the carriage, and entered the cemetery, followed by Gad with his arms full of flower-pots.

She walked down the main avenue between rows of Congressional monuments that some one has since compared to inverted cheese boxes, and finally reached the rising ground near the south-east corner, in which was the grave of old Hugh Condit.

There Eldiva placed the flowers, and then she sent Gad to borrow a watering-pot from the keeper and fill it from the well, to water the growing plants on the rave.

"Who is buried here, Diva?" inquired the child.

"No one is buried here, love! Only some one's body."

"Then why plant flowers here, Diva?"

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"Because while we live in the flesh we cling to the flesh, I suppose, my dear; I know no other reason."

The return of Gad with the watering-pot stopped the conversation.

And when their work was done they went back to the carriage and drove home.

At the end of two weeks Mr. and Mrs. Carnes returned from their short tour, and two days later Mr. and Mrs. Wells left Shadow Hall for Bloomfield.

Eldiva remained in her old home; but she soon began to feel very ill at ease within it. Zora was, as always, most affectionate to her niece, Mr. Carnes was faultlessly polite in all outward observances, but in some subtile way he made the young lady feel that she was unwelcome.

Eldiva had many relatives and visiting places, but no home to call her own; not even *this*, now that Neil Carnes was the master of the house.

In her morbid pride she would not draw one dollar of the money that Lord John Daw had placed to her account in the United States Bank.

And without that she had no means of living. She was seriously thinking what manner of work she could do to support herself, when one morning, in opening the *National Intelligencer*, she saw in it an advertisement for a teacher to the new Female Orphan Asylum.

She made up her mind on the instant, and without saying a word on the subject to Zora, she dressed herself and walked up into the city to the house of the Lady President of the Board of Managers, and made her application for the place in person.

Her references were numerous and satisfactory, and her engagement was secured before she left the house.

On her return home she had to tell Zora, who burst into tears and cried out strongly and bitterly against

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the arrangement; but there were occasions on which Eldiva could be as firm as a rock, and this was one of them.

So on the first of the ensuing April she took leave of the family and went to enter upon her duties at the asylum.

"A very fitting day to go upon such a fool's errand," Zora had remarked, on her departure.

And Eldiva's arrival at the asylum astonished Mrs. Dunn, as has been told.

CHAPTER XXI.

NEIL CARNES' SCHEME.

Neil Carnes caused the advertisement for the Lovel heirs that appeared in the English papers to be inserted in the Washington *National Intelligencer*, and then took it and showed it to his wife with an air of surprise, as if he had just seen it then for the first time.

"*You* are the next of kin to Lovel, of Brightwater Park, are you not?" he inquired, in assumed ignorance, as the lady devoured the paragraph with her eyes.

"Why, no, of course not. I am not a Lovel. Nerissa's father, had he lived, would have been the next of kin and the heir. I suppose, as his widow, I should have been entitled to my 'thirds;' but, in any case, Nerissa is the heiress; and failing her, you would be the inheritor," said Zora, with her eyes still riveted to the advertisement.

"I!" exclaimed the man, in well-feigned surprise.

"Of course; you ought to know that as well as I do, Neil. You are almost as near a kin to my first husband as you are to me. Your grandmother was a Lovel!"

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"Ah, true! I did not think of that. What genealogists you women are, to be sure. But, after all, it is of no consequence, my distant relationship to Lovel of Brightwater. Here are you and dear little Nea, who are the fortunate inheritors, and I congratulate you both with all my heart."

"Thank you, Neil. And your know, dear, it is all the same, for whatever is mine is yours."

"You were ever generous, Zora love. Now, I suppose I ought to put myself in communication with the Messrs. Field & Field, and then begin to collect documents and proofs."

"Oh, pray do so at once, Neil, dear; no time should be lost. Ah, we have been so poor, so pushed for money! And, oh, *genteel* poverty is the hardest of all poverty to bear. It must be so."

"I should think it is, indeed. Yes, Zora, I will go to work to-day— But what is the matter with you, Zora? Has this good news quite overcome you so as to set you shaking as with ague?" suddenly inquired Carnes, bending his beetle brows upon his shivering wife.

"No, Neil, no; but I think I have a chill. I had it before you brought me the paper. But it is nothing; it will go off, and I will take some bark. Never mind me. See to the inheritance."

"Where is the old Bible with the family record in it, to begin upon?"

"Oh, on the stand in the nursery, where it always stays," said the lady.

The man left the room, taking the papers with him, and Zora ran out into the garden, where Nea was at play, and caught the blind child up in her arms, exclaiming:

"Oh, my darling, darling little daughter, fortune has come to you at last!—fortune, my Nerissa! You are an

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heiress; you will have plenty of money, and can go to Paris to consult the best oculists there, and—"

"Mamma dear, what is it all about? What are you talking about?" inquired Nea, in fear and trembling, as the half-hysterical mother sank down upon a seat in the summer-house.

"You are an heiress, Nea! You are the sole heiress of a great fortune!"

"Tell me more, mamma dear—tell me more! I don't know what you mean yet," said the little girl, in sore perplexity.

The lady entered into an explanation and made the matter as clear as practicable to the mind of the child.

"And shall I—*I*—have all that money for my very own?"

"Yes, my darling, yes."

"To do *just* what I please with it?" demanded the child, as her darkened eyes dilated with wonder.

"Yes, love, yes, as soon as you become of age; and in the meantime you shall have as much to use as you wish. You shall not be stinted even now."

"And when I grow up it will be all mine to do what I please with."

"Yes, love, yes."

"Then I will divide it all between you and Lance," exclaimed Nea, clapping her hands for joy, and then leaning her cheek caressingly against her mother's face.

"Darling Nea!" softly breathed the lady, folding the child closer to her bosom.

"What makes your hands so cold, mamma? They are like ice?" inquired the little girl.

"I think I have a chill, love. We will go in the house," replied Zora, putting Nea down on her feet and rising to leave the summer-house.

She took the child by the hand and led her into the

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sitting-room, and sat down by the fire that the early spring morning made very acceptable.

She took Nea on her lap and stretched out her own feet to the glowing brands; but the cold shiverings increased so much, and were attended with such distressing languor and general illness, that at length she rang a hand-bell that stood upon the mantel-piece and brought old Aunt Apple to her presence.

"I have got an ague, auntie, and I want you to make some hot balm tea, and bring a hot brick for my feet. I am going up to bed now," said Mrs. Carnes, as once more she put Nea off her lap and rose from her seat.

"Lors-a-messy upon me, Miss Zora! Yer looks like deff, honey! Yer face is as blue as a blue-bag! Lemmy help yer up stars and then I kin tend ter de tea and de hot brick," said the old woman, anxiously proffering her services.

And, in fact, Zora Carnes had become so very ill that she was glad to avail herself of old Apple's assistance.

She went up stairs leaning on the old woman's arm, and closely followed by Nea, who, young as she was, had had some experience in ague and fever, and thought that nothing more serious ailed her mother.

Zora was carefully undressed and put to bed, where she lay shuddering under a pile of blankets, and attended by her blind child, while Apple went down to the kitchen to heat the brick and brew the balm tea.

But this attack of illness was no mere ague fit. The cold spell was succeeded by a fever that soon rose to a great height, and before night Zora Carnes was raving in delirium.

Dr. Hamilton, summoned in haste, pronounced the case a very serious one.

And before the week was ended typhus fever had declared itself.

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Eldiva was summoned from her post at the orphan asylum to the bed-side of her suffering relative.

And having obtained leave of absence from the board of managers, she promptly responded to the call and devoted herself to the patient.

Neil Carnes also showed himself as one of the most affectionate and faithful of husbands, seldom leaving the sick room, and never leaving the house after the dangerous symptoms had set in.

Dr. Hamilton came three times a day and called a consultation of the most eminent physicians of the city.

On the fourteenth day of her illness Zora returned to consciousness long enough to kiss and bless her child, and then she fell into a state of coma, from which she quietly passed away.

The widowed husband exhibited a wildness of sorrow that caused his friends to fear for his reason.

Little Nea sank into a silent and motionless stupor of despair that really seemed like insensibility or idiocy.

Eldiva showed the greatest firmness of all the household. The last few years had inured her to suffering. She kept her self-control, and took the direction of affairs in the suddenly disorganized household.

The mortal remains of poor Zora Carnes were laid in the family lot in the Congressional Burying Ground.

When Eldiva's leave of absence had expired she prepared to leave Shadow Hall, and begged Neil Carnes, who was now the guardian of Nerissa Lovel, to allow the child to go with her to the asylum.

"Not as an inmate, to be entered on the books, of course, Cousin Neil, but as my visitor and charge," she explained.

But Carnes answered her that Nea was all that was left to him of his beloved Zora, and he could not part with her.

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Eldiva, who did not esteem the man very highly, now wondered at the depth of his love for Zora, and grief at her loss, which was so strong as to make him hold on to the blind child, who could only be a troublesome burden to him. He did not tell her, or any one else, that Nea was now the heiress of millions, and that he had a deep pecuniary interest in keeping her under his own control; nor did Eldiva suspect the change of fortune that had come to the girl; for she had never seen the advertisement in the *National Intelligencer*, which had appeared but once and then had been withdrawn; or if she had, she never would have suspected that it referred to Nerissa.

So Eldiva left Shadow Hall, reluctantly abandoning the blind girl to the doubtful care of her step-father, and the tender service of the faithful but ignorant old negroes.

Now, Neil Carnes would have been the heir of Brightwater Park but for the blind girl who stood between him and its vast revenues. He was in most respects a thoroughly selfish and unprincipled villain; but, as a matter of temperament, he was no murderer at heart. He would have shrunk from taking life, even if he had been certain that he could do so without detection and with perfect impunity; but he was very anxious to get Nerissa out of his way before taking any steps toward a correspondence with the solicitors who had advertised in the *London Times* for the heirs of the Brightwater estate.

He searched the family records, and studied their genealogy: and almost at the outset of his investigation he discovered a fact that, perverted and misrepresented, might secure to him the immediate inheritance.

It was *this*:

George Lovel, the husband of Zora, and father of

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Nerissa, had, in one sense, died childless, and in total ignorance that a posthumous child would be born to him; so he had left a will bequeathing all his small personal effects to his widow.

Nerissa came into this world just six months after her father's departure from it.

After her mother's second marriage to Duncan Roslyn, when the child was about three years old, Nea in the careless manner of the country, was called by her stepfather's name and no one but the immediate friends and neighbors of the parties knew that she had any right to any other name.

Of course, Nerissa, as she grew up, knew that she was a Lovel, though she was accustomed to hear herself called Roslyn, and loved the latter name because it was Lance's, and her mother's better than she did the former one, which was that of her father, whom she had never seen.

Neil Carnes was now posted in all these particulars, and was resolved to twist and turn them all to his own advantage, as he well knew how to do.

That George Lovel had died without heirs could be easily proved; that a posthumous child had been born to him could be as easily suppressed, under all the circumstances; that on this side of the ocean no one interested in the little heiress knew anything about the inheritance, while on the other side no one interested in the inheritance knew anything about the rightful heiress.

Nerissa Lovel ignored and put out of the way, the claim of Neil Carnes to the estate, through his maternal grandmother, was as clear as possible.

Thus if Neil Carnes could effectually conceal the existence of Nerissa, and take the proofs of his own claim to England, there seemed nothing to prevent his immediate entrance into the Brightwater estate. To be rid of Nerissa was the first necessity in the case.

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But to be rid of her without doing her any bodily harm.

While he was turning this matter over in his mind he received a note, through the post-office, from Eldiva, in which she requested him to send her certain books, bearing her name, which she had left at Shadow Hall.

In a fit of good-nature, Neil Carnes looked up the books specified—Walter Scott's "Poems," James Fennimore Cooper's "Spy," and some other then new publications, and he took them, in person, to the asylum.

On inquiry at the door he was told that Mrs. Daw was in the school-room.

He sent in his card, and very soon Eldiva, leaving her pupils in the care of a "big girl" as "monitor," came out to receive her visitor.

She warmly thanked Mr. Carnes for the trouble he had taken in bringing her books, and then asked him if he would like to look through the institution.

He assented, and she conducted him through the asylum.

Then they returned together to the parlor, where they found a tall and handsome brunette of middle age, whom Eldiva introduced as Mrs. Dunn, the matron of the asylum.

With her was a visitor, to whom she had been called. He was a short, stout, red-haired man, with a large, inflamed face, and a breath redolent of rum. He was, however, neatly dressed in gray homespun cloth, and looked like a decent countryman marred by intemperance. He wanted to get a girl, "a bound girl," as he said, to live in his family, but was informed that the asylum did not "bind out" its orphan inmates to domestic service.

"Umph!" exclaimed the countryman; "then I suppose I must go and inquire at the Poor House."

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And he arose from the chair into which he had unceremoniously thrown himself, picked up his hat from the floor, and turned to leave the room.

"Stop one moment," said Neil Carnes, laying his hand gently upon the stranger's arm.

"Eh?" exclaimed the latter, turning around.

"I think I know a girl, one of a large family, whose poor, over-burdened father would be glad to send her into a good home."

"Eh, what! where is she? If she suits me I might take her," said the man.

"Can you call at my house this afternoon or evening? Here is my card, with the address. Shadow Hall, New Jersey avenue."

"Well, yes, I reckon I mought as well go there as go to the Poor House for a gal; it's a deal nigher, for I know the Poor House is way out nigh the outskirts of the city some'rs," replied the countryman, taking and pocketing the card.

Then he gruffly lifted his hat and departed.

"I hope you will excuse me, sir, but I must return to my duties," said Ruth, as she inclined her head to Carnes and walked out, leaving the cousins together.

"What have you to say to me, Neil?" inquired Eldiva.

"I wish to tell you that I think of taking Nerissa to Paris this spring."

"To PARIS!" exclaimed Eldiva, in a tone of astonishment that no capital letters could convey.

"Yes, my dear girl, to Paris. You know it was the dream of her poor dear mother's life to take the girl to Paris and have her eyes treated by the famous oculists there."

"Yes; but it was *only* a dream."

"A dream that I shall try to realize by taking the girl

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to Paris and having her eyes examined by the most eminent oculists of that great city," said Neil Carnes.

"Indeed, at this stage, I do really think that you had better let Nea's eyes alone and leave her to nature. Why, don't you know that she is gradually recovering her sight? Don't you know that she can see to go all about the house, and up and down the stairs, without being obliged to feel her way, and without the slightest danger of falling?" demanded Eldiva.

"Yes, I know that, but—"

"And she can even tell us apart by sight when she stands very close."

"I am aware of that, but—"

"And her sight is surely, though slowly, improving. Better let well enough alone—especially where the eyesight of a child is concerned, Cousin Neil."

"Now, Eldiva, you are talking like a child! Who do you suppose is the better judge of these matters—you or the world-renowned oculists to whom I am going to submit the case?" questioned Neil Carnes.

"When do you intend to sail for Europe?" coldly inquired Eldiva, without answering his question.

"In a very few days; but I shall bring Nerissa here to take leave of you before we leave."

"And how long do you think you will be absent?"

"Oh, that depends upon the length of time it may take to treat the child's eyes; but if the oculist should decide that it will be better to let them alone, we can return at once."

"And what do you intend to do with Shadow Hall in the meanwhile? Shut it up?"

"No, give it up, sell the furniture to a dealer, and send the negroes down to Bloomfield."

"And your own business?" pursued Eldiva.

"Will go to the—*dogs*, of course; but I would sacrifice

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much more than my business for the good of dear Nerissa, all that I have left of my most beloved wife. But, however, when I return I shall be able to recover my business. And now, my dear little cousin, as I have kept you already too long from your school-room, I must bid you good-day," said Carnes, rising and shaking hands with Eldiva.

"He is a very strange man," said the young lady, when he had left.

Meanwhile, Neil Carnes hurried home. He thought he had discovered a plan of ridding himself of Nerissa without danger or suspicion.

The little girl happened to be the first to meet him on his return.

"Cousin Neil," said the child, who had continued to call her step-father by the name she had been accustomed to give him before his marriage with her mother—"Cousin Neil, there has been a man here to see you."

"What sort of a man, my little lady?" inquired the lawyer, laying his hand upon her dark, curling hair.

"A big, bluff man."

"How did your ladyship know he was a big, bluff man? Could you see him?" laughed the lawyer.

"Oh, yes, I could see *that* much! And he said he would come again in the evening."

"Ah!" said the lawyer; and he said no more just then.

In the evening, after Nerissa had gone to bed, the visitor came again, and was received alone by Neil Carnes in the lawyer's office.

He was the countryman whom Neil had meet at the Asylum in search of a little white slave.

As soon as he was closeted with the lawyer in his sanctum he opened his business by abruptly asking when

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he could see the girl that he wanted to have bound to him if she would suit.

Carnes replied that he might see her the next day, but that he wished first to ask his visitor some questions:

"Fire away!" said the man.

"In the first place, what is your name? You have not told me that yet," said Carnes.

"Tom Roach, and not ashamed to own it! What next?"

"Your business?"

"Butcher."

"Ah! where do you live?"

"'Bout a hundred miles back in the country—Rappahannock county Ole Virginny."

"Umph!—Married?"

"In course I am, else wot would I want with a female servant?"

"Ah! to be sure! Children of course!"

"Three little uns under five year old. Too little to work. That's w'y the old 'oman wants a bound gal to help 'er. Wot else?"

"Well—I do not know if I have any other question to ask you—except this: Is there any one here in the city you could refer to for your own"—the lawyer was about to say *character*, but fearing to offend, he said, after a pause—"responsibility."

"Don't know a blamed man, woman or child in this blamed city, and don't want to!"

"Ah!" exclaimed the lawyer in a tone that was unconsciously a blithe one. "Well, what brought you to Washington, if I might ask the question?"

"A little matter of private business as is no one's affair but my own. And while I was here I promised the ole 'oman to look around and find her a bound gal out'n the Poor House or 'sylum. That's all about it. Now, then?"

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"Now, then, I have business in London county next week, and I will bring you down a handy girl of thirteen for whom I really wish to get a country home, and whom I will guarantee as honest, truthful, humble and industrious."

"The very gal for us, if you can prove her to have them good points."

"I can, then; but can you wait a week for her?"

"For such a gal as that? Well, now, I reckon I might manage to do so."

"Very well. Give me your address."

"My which!"

"Tell me the name of the town where you live."

"Oh, it aint a town exactly; it is a village. The village of Greenmont, on the Winchester road."

"Very well. When do you return to your home?" inquired Neil Carnes, as he proceeded to take down the name and address of his visitor in his note-book.

"I'm gwine back to-morrow morning, please the pipers."

"And you will be at home all the week?"

"Where else would I be? In course I shall be at home."

"Then you may expect me with the girl next week."

"Very well, then, I *will* expect yer! And don't yer go and diserpint me, neither! And now I'll bid yer good-night! I'm putting up at the 'Drovers,' and it is some distance from this yere. Good-night, Squire! It's lucky I fell in long o' you. Good-night!"

"Good-night," said Neil Carnes, as he closed the door after his visitor.

Then he sat down and rubbed his hands, saying to himself:

"She had as well be in the midst of the Great Desert Sahara as down in Rappahannock, where no one in

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Washington will be likely ever to hear of her again, while no one in London ever *has* heard of her. And after a while, when my claim is settled, and it will be safe to do so, I will look after her and provide comfortably for her."

And with this balm laid to his somewhat disturbed conscience, the lawyer went to his chamber and retired to bed.

In the course of the following week all his arrangements were completed.

The furniture was sent off to auction, the old servants packed off with the old horse and cariole to St. Mary's county, and the house given up.

While these changes were being made, Neil Carnes took board for himself and his little step-daughter at a private house in the immediate neighborhood.

Again Eldiva begged that the little girl might be permitted to remain with her at the asylum until the day of their departure should come; but again Neil Carnes declared that he could not, even for a day, consent to part with the dear child who was all that he had left of his beloved wife.

And Eldiva wondered at his devotion to the memory of Zora, and half believed in it, for why else should he burden himself *always* with the care of a child, whose imperfect sight must render her a source of constant anxiety?

The old servants raised a horrible "hullaballoo" at the parting with their little mistress, and could only be reconciled by the assurance that she was going to Paris to have her sight restored.

On the last day before leaving the city Neil Carnes took Nerissa to the asylum to bid good-by to Eldiva.

They held their farewell interview in the parlor.

Nerissa, child-like, was pleased at the idea of going to

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sea. *Lance* was at sea, and she had a vague idea that she might meet him somewhere "over yonder."

Eldiva was grieved at the separation, but consoled by the seeming happiness of Nerissa.

It was growing late, the lawyer arose to take leave, and little Nerissa threw herself into the arms of Eldiva, exclaiming:

"Good-by! Good-by! Good-by! dear Diva! Put flowers on my darling mother's grave when you put them on your friend's. Not *cut* flowers to die there, but planted flowers to grow and bloom like she if blooming in Heaven."

"Yes, love, I will remember and do so."

"And when I come back a few months from this time, may be I may be able to see your dear face, plainly, *plainly*," added the little girl.

"Yes, dear! Look at me now, dear Nea and let me look at your pretty eyes!" said the young lady, putting her hand under the child's chin and raising it. "Such beautiful brown orbs! Who would think their sight less than perfect! Can you see my face at all, Nea?"

The child fixed her star-like eyes upon her, intently gazing, and then said:

"With all my *might*, I can see your pale, soft face, and dark hair and—dark eyes and—red lips—dimly."

"Can you see all that, Nea?"

"Oh, yes, when I look steadily, and send out my *mind* into my eyes."

"Then you *are* indeed recovering your sight, and I don't see the use of your going to Paris!" exclaimed Eldiva.

"Oh, but I *want* to go! I want to see well enough to learn to read and write against the time when Lance comes back."

"To be sure she does! Don't try to hinder the child,

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Eldiva!—Come, Nea, we must really be going!—Good-by Eldiva!" said the lawyer, abruptly, holding out his hand to the young lady.

"And is this really good-by? Shall I see you no more before leaving the city?" inquired Eldiva, regretfully.

"Why, certainly not. We leave before daybreak to-morrow morning in the Alexandria stage-coach, *en route* for Norfolk, to take passage on the *Swan*, which sails from that port on Saturday. Once more good-by."

Eldiva shook hands with Neil Carnes and then caught and strained Nerissa to her heart before releasing her.

Neil Carnes took Nerissa back to the house where they had lodged since Shadow Hall had been dismantled, and where the good landlady and all her boarders had been greatly edified by the seeming devotion of the man to his little step-daughter.

And the next morning before daybreak, they both entered the stage-coach that called for them at the house door and started for Alexandria, the first stage of their journey to Norfolk.

They reached that old port shortly after sunrise and stopped at the old Royal George Tavern.

Neil Carnes purposely allowed the schooner for Norfolk to sail without them, and then took Nerissa down to the wharf that they might find out they were too late for the *Swallow*.

"There will not be another packet for a week, Nea, and it will be of no use to stay in this town, and unlucky to go back to Washington. Suppose we take the Winchester stage-coach to-night and start for the Blue Ridge Mountains. You have never been there. How would you like that?"

"Oh, very much! Oh, *so* much! I have never seen a mountain in my life! I have only heard them read about!" eagerly exclaimed the child.

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"And you *can* see them if we go."

"Oh, yes! for I can see hills and woods against the sky, dimly, you know."

"Then you shall see mountains."

"Oh, Cousin Neil, you are so very good to me! Mother in heaven must love you so much!" said Nea, gratefully.

"Nonsense! Nonsense, child!" exclaimed the lawyer, with a twinge of his conscience.

There was not much to see in Alexandria, but Neil Carnes took his little step-daughter around the town and devoted himself to her amusement all the forenoon.

After dinner the tired child lay down and slept until tea time.

The next morning, after breakfasting by candle light, the lawyer and his little charge set out in the Winchester stage for Rappahannock county.

At sunrise the next morning they entered the little mountain hamlet of Greenmont.

Neil Carnes woke up his little step-daughter just as the stage drew up at the rural tavern of the "Eagle."

He took her gently out of the coach and led her into the house, and gave her into the care of a bright negro chambermaid, and then set off on foot to look up the butcher.

He found him living over his own shop, in a small, two-story, white-framed house.

Roach was behind his own counter, upon which lay steaks, cutlets, sausages and so forth, while hams and shoulders hung from the ceiling.

"Good morning. How is business?" inquired the lawyer, standing before the counter.

"Good morning!—oh, business—dull as ditch-water! —So you've come! Where's the gal?" inquired the man,

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whose breatn, early as it was in the morning, smelt of rum.

"She is at the tavern. I wanted to have a little more talk with you before you see her. In the first place she is a strong, healthy girl—"

"If she isn't yer needn't fetch her to us! One inwaleed is enough in one house, and that's my ole 'oman," interrupted the man.

"Oh! is your wife sick?"

"Never well! There's where it is! Allers a gruntin'."

"Ah!—I was about to tell you that this girl, Nelly Ross, is an orphan, for whom I have undertaken to procure a good home in the country. She does not yet know that she is to be placed out at service, and I do not wish that she should know it until I have gone. She is much attached to me and would make a scene at parting. So, I propose to leave her, as if for a day's sport on the mountain, and you can explain as much as you please after my departure. Do you understand?"

"Oh, yes! It is something like the dodge the tender-hearted masters use w'en they take the little niggers away to sell 'em among strangers," said Tom Roach.

Neil Carnes winced.

"But look yer, now! I'm not agwine to 'buy a pig in a poke,' I must see that there gal before I 'gree to take her, for if she aint up to the mark, I'll not have 'er even if you did fetch 'er," said the butcher.

"Very well, you shall see her."

"And my ole 'oman must see 'er, too! My ole 'oman is mighty particular. She wouldn't have a little nigger about her at no price. She can't abide 'em. That's the reason w'y I had to look for a w'ite gal, to wait on 'er."

"Very well, I say; your wife can see her, and she will see that the girl is a treasure. Bring your wife up to the

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tavern after breakfast, and warn her to drop no word by which the girl may suspect that she is to be left behind."

"Oh, *she's* sharp, is my ole 'oman."

"And you are to take your *cue* from me."

"Jes' so."

"Good morning, then. I shall expect you after breakfast," said Neil Carnes, as he left the shop.

When he got back to the Eagle, breakfast was on the table, and Nerissa waiting for Cousin Neil to take her down.

They were very hungry and keenly enjoyed the fresh venison steaks and other mountain luxuries that were not yet out of season.

After breakfast Neil told his little step-daughter to put on her hat and walk up and down the piazza with him, and while they were walking he said :

"This will rest you after sitting cramped up so long in the stage-coach."

"Yes, Cousin Neil ! Thank you ! Oh, how good you are to me," replied the girl.

"Presently I am going up on the mountain for a day's sport. That would be too tiresome a jaunt for you."

"Oh ! yes, Cousin Neil ! Never mind me !"

"And I do not like to leave you alone in this public tavern."

"Oh ! I am not a bit afraid, Cousin Neil ! You go and enjoy yourself ! never mind me !" said the child with eager generosity.

"Ah ! but it is not right to leave you here alone. So I have asked a worthy couple whom I used to know before they moved away from the city and settled in this place, to call and take you to their home for the day. Will you go ?"

"Oh ! yes, Cousin Neil, if it will make you feel any easier."

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"That's my good little girl! And, sure enough, here come our friends," added the lawyer, as the butcher and his wife walked up into the piazza.

"Ah! good morning! This is the little girl I wish to leave in your care to-day, Mr. Roach! And this lady, I think, is Mrs. Roach?" said Neil Carnes in a confused manner, as he presented Nerissa to her future master, and then turned to greet her future mistress, who was a small, thin, sallow-faced woman, with black hair and very sharp black eyes.

"Yes! this is my ole 'oman! *She'll do*," whispered the butcher, after a searching glance at his future white slave.

"Come this way a moment," whispered Neil Carnes to the butcher, leading him off to the other end of the piazza and leaving the little girl to make acquaintance with her new mistress.

"*Your wife is posted?*" inquired Neil Carnes, when they were out of hearing of the others.

"O, yes! She's just a gwine to treat the little un as a wisitor, 'for this day only,' as the circus folks say."

"Quite right. And, Roach! it nearly breaks my heart to leave the child! But what can be done? I can't travel around the world with a girl tugging at my heels!—What I was going to say is this: Don't let her know that I have given her up! Let her think that I have been lost or killed on the mountains or something."

"Jes' so! I understand, Judge!"

After a little more talk, the two men turned and joined the woman and child.

A few minutes later they, the new master and mistress, prepared to depart with their little white slave.

Nerissa threw herself in her step-father's arms, exclaiming:

"You are so good! So good to me, dear Cousin Neil!

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You think of me all the time! Take care of yourself on the mountain, dear Cousin Neil! Don't let the bears or wolves get at you!"

"No, my darling, I will not!—Hurry off now, and don't keep our good friends waiting," exclaimed Neil Carnes, whose conscience was becoming troublesome again.

Nea, laughed, kissed him heartily and joined the couple, who led her away into bondage more bitter than that of negro slavery.

Ten minutes after that, Neil Carnes set off to walk to the next post-house, where he took the stage for Winchester, *en route* for Norfolk, whence on Saturday he sailed by the *Swan* for London.

CHAPTER XXII.

LITTLE NEA'S TROUBLES.

Little Nea unconscious of having been betrayed into captivity, followed her new master and mistress quite cheerfully.

The sidewalk of the mountain hamlet street was very rugged, however, and Nea lagged behind, and stumbled more than once.

"Why don't you walk, little girl?" inquired Roach, looking back.

"The pavement is so rough, and—I'm afraid of falling," said Nea, deprecatingly.

The man burst out into a loud laugh.

"Pavement!" he exclaimed. "Who ever heard of a pavement in Greenmont?" he inquired, as he took the hand of the child to lead her on.

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His sallow-cheeked, black-eyed little wife looked querulously around, but said nothing just then.

"How long has your mother and father been dead?" coarsely inquired the man, glancing down at Nea's black dress.

"My father has been in Heaven twelve years—" began Nea; but here the woman interrupted her.

"Why, you're hardly twelve years old yourself. How could he be dead so long if he was your father?"

"I don't know, ma'am; but he went to Heaven months before I came in the world."

"Oh! How long has your mother been dead?"

Here the child almost broke down; but she repressed her rising sobs and tears, and falteringly answered:

"My dear mother is *not* dead, ma'am; nor my father, either. They are even more alive than we are, for they live in Heaven."

"Oh! I reckon you're a Sunday-school scholar, aint you? What Sunday-school did you go to? The Methodist, was it?" inquired the woman.

"No, ma'am; I never went to any," replied the child.

"Never went to any Sunday-school? That was great neglect in your people. Why didn't they send you?"

"It was on account of my eyes."

"'Eyes!'" echoed the woman. "What's the matter with your eyes?"

"I had the measles and lost my sight when I was a baby," gently replied Nea.

"Oh! you did!" exclaimed the woman, stopping short, and turning the child around to face her. "Look up here at me!"

Nea obeyed, lifting her beautiful soft, brown orbs to meet the sharp, black beads of her mistress.

"Well, there's nothing the matter with your eyes *now*, anyhow; they're as sound looking eyes as I ever saw in

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my life. So that old excuse won't do any longer, and you'll have to go to Sunday-school—after your work's done—Sunday mornings," said the woman, as she released the child and walked on.

"'Work's done Sunday mornings!" echoed Nea in perplexity; while Thomas Roach nudged his wife, and whispered:

"Don't you know she hasn't been told yet? It's to be broke to her."

"Oh! I forgot. And I don't see the use of such nonsense, anyway," snapped the sharp little woman, as they reached their own door, and entered through the shop, where the overpowering smell of raw fresh meat sickened Nea.

"Took in any money this morning, Tom?" inquired the butcher of a fat, freckled-faced, flaxen-haired boy behind the counter.

"No, dad; not a cent."

"Dull, discouraging sort of a place to live in! I'll have to salt down the most of that meat, if I don't sell it before night," growled the butcher, as he took his place behind the counter.

The boy came out and followed his mother, who was leading the way into the back room.

"Are you the new bound girl?" inquired the lad, good-naturedly going to the side of Nea, when they had reached the dingy little parlor.

"Hold your tongue, you fool! can't you?" sharply demanded his mother, as she turned and administered a sound box of the ears of the inquisitive boy.

Nea shuddered, and repressed the question of: "What do you mean?" that was rising to her lips.

The woman dropped down in a low rocking-chair as if she was exhausted—in fact, there was nothing vigorous about the sallow little creature except her temper. She

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slowly took off her bonnet and her shawl, and handed them to the child, saying:

"Here, Nelly, take these up stairs, and hang them up in the closet; and you can leave your own hat and cape up there, too."

"Yes, ma'am. Where are the stairs?" inquired the little girl, gazing vaguely around, and seeing nothing clearly.

"'Where are the stairs?' Where are your *eyes?* There are the stairs—there, in that corner!" querulously exclaimed Mrs. Roach, pointing to a step-ladder that led up into a trap-door.

Nea, unconscious of her real position in the house, and wondering greatly at the impoliteness of her supposed hostess, gathered the things in her arms and groped to the foot of the ladder, and began to climb it carefully.

"You go out in the kitchen and make a fire to get dinner; and then bring the apples in. You and Nelly 'll have to pare them. Where are the children?" demanded the mother.

"In the back yard," shortly replied the boy, still nursing his smarting ear.

"'In the back yard!' Playing in the dirt, I'll warrant. Go right straight and bring them in! *That's* the way you take care of them when I'm gone? Go bring 'em right straight in!"

"I was minding of the shop, and couldn't be following of them at the same time," grumbled the boy.

"You—"

But before another word of rebuke could be uttered she started up with a loud scream, exclaiming:

"What in the world has happened?"

Yes, what had happened?

A crash, a fall through the trap-door, and the form of

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the half blind child lying motionless at the foot of the ladder.

Thomas Roach rushed in from the shop, the small children ran in from the yard.

"What the deuce has been the matter here!" demanded Roach, with his hair on end.

"Don't you see the bound girl has fallen through the trap-door and killed herself?" screamed Mrs. Roach, frantic with excitement. "It's all *your* fault, Roach! Yours, yours, yours! And I'm the most *tried* woman on the face of the earth! You had no business to bring her here! None, none, none! You might have known she would fall down and kill herself, and now she's gone and done it!"

"Oh, I *hope* not! Oh, my Lord, I hope not!" groaned Roach, who was down on his knees beside the body of the girl, trying to find out the extent of her injuries, while the boy stood by gaping and staring with astonishment and terror. "Maybe she's only stunned. I *think* she's only stunned! Tom! Run—run for the doctor and ask him please to hurry here directly! Tell him what's happened! Be off like a shot!" said the man.

Tom went off like a shot.

"Oh, *how* did this happen, Jane?" demanded the man, turning towards his wife.

"How did it happen? Don't be a bigger fool than ever, Roach! It happened by her falling through the trap-door! It's all *your* fault! Every bit! I'm the most *tried* woman that ever did live! Why don't you lift up that girl and lay her on the sofa!"

"My dear, I am afraid to move her until the doctor comes for fear I might do harm. If there should be any bones broken—"

"'Bones broken!' Her neck's broken, as you might have known it would be? It's all *your* doings! You've

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got that girl's life to answer for! Oh, what trouble! I'm the most tried woman—"

Roach, a bully towards most persons, was an abject coward in the presence of the tiny woman whose body he could have crushed to death betwen his two great hands. He subsided into silence that was not broken until the arrival of the village doctor, who entered the room heralded by young Tom.

"I'm sorry to hear there has been an accident," said the physician, after a short nod of greeting to Mrs. Roach.

"Oh, yes, Doctor, and it was enough to 'a killed me. You know how nervous I am. I am sure I should not wonder if I should die from it! But it was all *his* fault! He might have known she would have fallen down and broken her neck. Will you just feel my pulse and give me something?" querulously demanded the woman.

"Yes, ma'am—yes, presently, when I have looked to the girl. This is she, I suppose?" said the dootor, stooping down to examine the insensible form at the foot of the ladder.

"She's the new bound girl, Doctor. Come to-day, and the very first time I tried to get any good out of her she must fall down and break her neck! I'm the most *tried* woman—"

"Her neck is not broken, madam; but she is stunned by a concussion of the brain from falling and striking the back of her head. She must be laid on a bed, Mr. Roach, could not a cot be brought down and placed here for her accommodation?"

"Certainly Doctor. You say she is not killed? Thank the Lord for that!" said Thomas Roach, as he climbed the ladder,

"And what is Tommy to sleep on if you bring down his cot?" querulously inquired the little, sharp woman.

But her husband had disappeared through the trap-

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door and did not hear her question, so the doctor answered it:

"He can sleep on the floor, ma'am. To do so will not hurt him, and the cot must be brought down here for the use of this child."

While the doctor spoke, a knocking and a bumping was heard above, and presently the feet of Tom Roach and the long side-rods of the folded cot were seen at the open trap-door above. With much difficulty the man engineered the cot down the ladder, and then it was stretched out in the middle of the parlor and hastily made up from bed-clothes brought down stairs.

The insensible form of the child was laid on it, and the doctor proceeded to a more careful examination.

"There are no bones broken at all," he said. "Bring me a basin."

When the bowl was brought he stripped the left arm of the child and bled her.

As the blood began to flow, Nea opened her eyes and looked around.

"There! she will do now!" said the doctor, as he bandaged up her arm; "bring me my saddle-bags in here, boy."

Little Tom ran out and soon returned with the saddle-bags taken from the back of the doctor's horse. It was the doctor's traveling drug store.

He opened them and took out several vials, and asked for a wine-glass and a little water.

There was not a wine-glass in the house; but they brought him a tea-cup, and he compounded a composing draught for the patient and administered it himself.

"Now, then, let her be very quiet, and she will be all right in the morning," he said, as he arose to leave the house.

"Doctor! you haven't felt my pulse! You haven't

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given me anything! And I am as nervous as an oyster. But it is always so! I am always the last to be thought of! I am the most *tried* woman on the face of the earth! Here feel my pulse, Doctor, and prescribe something for me!"

The doctor took her wrist in his hand and said:

"Yes! Your pulse is much too quick. I shall prescribe a sedative—(for the comfort of your family,") he added, in his private thoughts, as he once more opened his saddle-bags, and made up a mild mixture of compound lavender which he left with the woman.

Meanwhile Nea, under the influence of the Dover powder, slept profoundly, with a peaceful smile upon her face.

That smile had been lighted by a flitting glimpse of paradise she had caught, when she first recovered consciousness and opened her eyes—it was the paradise of perfect and suddenly restored vision! This was the effect, and not an unprecedented effect, of the fall, the shock, and the concussion that had started the half torpid optic nerve into full life and activity. But her consciousness was still a little confused, and so she made no sign, but after swallowing the sedative, sank into repose, which soon deepened into profound slumber, in which she lay for hours.

She slept profoundly through the night and only waked up in the morning, when Mr. Roach walked heavily down the step-ladder aad threw open the shutters with a couple of clangs, letting in a flood of sunshine upon the face and form of the sleeper.

She sat up in bed, gaping and rubbing her eyes, and scarcely wide enough awake to wonder at her position.

"Well, my little girl, how do you find yourself this morning?" inquired the man.

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"I—don't know—where I am," replied the child, in some confusion.

"Well, I don't wonder as your brains is addled after such a fall as you had! We thought you was a goner, I can tell you that, my little girl!"

"I—don't know what you mean. I—don't know where I am," said Nea, slowly, as if trying to collect her faculties.

"Why, you are in the house of Thomas Roach, butcher, where you was left to stay by your gardeen yesterday, don't you know?"

"Oh, yes! so I was! and he was to come for me last night! Was I asleep when he came? Did I go to sleep in my clothes? How stupid of me! Why didn't he have me waked up? Has he gone back to the tavern? Is he waiting for me there? Will he come for me this morning, or must I go to him? Please tell me what I must do, sir! And, oh! I thank you very much for your hospitality to me!" said Nea, politely, as she looked about her, wondering with incredulous rapture at the sudden clear vision that had come to her.

Thomas Roach did not reply in any way, but sat staring stupidly at the girl.

"Please answer my questions, sir—please tell me!" pleaded Nea.

"Tell you *what*, my little girl? Heaven and earth and t'other place! I can't answer all at once!" exclaimed the man, with a dazed look.

"Well where is my Cousin Neil? I mean my stepfather? Did he come last night?"

"Who? I don't know who you are talking about."

"The gentleman who left me here and was to have called for me last night."

"Oh, *him?* He never come back at all."

"Never come back at all!" echoed Nea, in surprise.

"Not him."

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"Oh, then he must have come down from the mountain quite late at night, too late to come here to disturb the family. He must be at the tavern. Won't you be so very good as to take me there after breakfast, sir?"

"May be so, if you are well enough to go," doubtfully replied the man.

"Oh, *I* am well enough—of course I am! Why shouldn't I be?" said Nea, rising and standing up. "I don't know, either," she added, faintly, putting her hand to her forehead. "My head is dizzy—*very* dizzy. I wonder what makes it so? I wonder how I came to lie down in my clothes?"

"Is it possible that you don't remember what has happened to you, my little girl?"

"I know I came off a long journey and stopped at the Eagle Tavern with my guardian, and that he sent me home here with you, while he went up on the mountain. That is all I know. I must have been very tired to have lain down and gone to sleep in my clothes without remembering a word about it."

"You didn't lie down and go to sleep, my girl. You was picked up for dead and stretched out there on the cot and bled. Don't you remember that? Look at your arm, where the sleeve is ripped open and the bandage is put on."

"What—what is this?" inquired the child, staring with dismay at the stained bandage around the bend of her elbow.

"Don't you know you fell through that there trapdoor?" inquired the man, pointing to the opening.

Nea stared up at it and shook her head.

A very sharp voice came down from above.

"Thomas Roach! Are you going to stop there talking to that child all day? Or are you going to make up

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the kitchen fire and hang on the kettle for breakfast? Tell me that!"

"My dear Jane—"

"Do hold your tongue and go and do as I tell you! You make me just as nervous as an oyster! But I am the most *put upon* woman and the most *tried* on the face of this earth!" scolded the little shrew, as she went on to dress herself, tramping over the bare floor above and making more noise than necessary.

"Lie down, child! Lie down! You're as white as a sheet, and 'ill fall down if you don't," said the man as he passed out into the kitchen to obey his wife.

Nea sank down on the cot and tried to remember what had occurred, but all was confusion from the time of her fall.

Mrs. Roach came down stairs, pitying herself and finding fault with the rest of the world, especially with little Nea, lying pale and wan on her cot.

"I don't know what your guardian could have been thinking of, to foist such a poor, weak thing as you are on us, I'm sure!" she snapped, as she sat down in ner little old rocking-chair and began to rock violently.

"I am very sorry, ma'am, to be so much trouble. I don't know how I came to fall and hurt myself," began Nea.

"Because you were a fool—that was the reason!" sharply replied the woman.

"I—I—think it was because of my eyes; I couldn't see very well."

"Your eyes! That's only an excuse! There's nothing at all the matter with your eyes!"

"There is nothing the matter with them now, ma'am. I can see—so well!—ever since I woke up!"

"Do hold you tongue. You make me as nervous as—

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as an oyster! What did your guardian *mean*, anyhow, by imposing such a thing as *you* upon us? *Tell me that!*"

"I'm so very sorry he did it, ma'am; but it will not be long before he comes to fetch me now."

"Oh! *won't* it, indeed? You'll soon find out all about that. Now, then! Why don't you get up? Are you going to lie there chattering all the morning? I want that there cot out of the way, and there don't seem to be anything the matter with you now."

"The"—Nea hesitated between truth and politeness for a moment, and then giving the victory to politeness, as too many of us do, added—"gentleman told me to lie still."

"Oh, he did!" exclaimed the "lady." "Well, I tell you to get up and wash your face and bestir yourself. One inwillid is enough in one house, and that's *me*. Get up!"

Nea, thinking her lines had fallen upon strange rather than pleasant places, got up to order, feeling a little dizzy in her head and uncertain in her feet.

"Now go up stairs—no, don't go up stairs, for you would fall down again like a fool. Go into the kitchen and tell Roach to show you where to find a tin basin and a crash towel to wash your face with, and then come in here and see if you can't do something to earn your keep."

Nea, wondering much at the new and strange people she had fallen in with, obeyed, wishing in her secret heart that "Cousin Neil" would soon make his appearance and take her away.

She asked the "gentleman" in the kitchen, who was busy paring potatoes for breakfast, where she could find the articles; and when she had been provided with them and had made use of them, she returned to the dingy

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parlor, or sitting-room, and said to the sallow little hypochondriac in the rocking-chair:

"I am ready to do anything that I can do to help you, ma'am."

"Well, then fold up them bed clothes on that cot. Do you think I want to turn my parlor into a horsepittle?"

Nea obeyed and folded every piece neatly.

Then the woman, raising her shrill voice, shrieked for "Roach" to "come and carry that there cot up stairs. It made her as nervous as an oyster to see them bed things in her parlor."

The man obeyed the small vixen as promptly as the child had done.

When the room was cleared and the table set, the children came down from the attic above, and the boy came in from the shop in front, and the family had breakfast.

Nea, still giddy and nauseated from the fall, could eat nothing, but left the table and went to the shop door to look up the street to see if she could see her Cousin Neil coming.

CHAPTER XXIII.

NEA LEARNS HER FATE.

The Roaches, taking advantage of her temporary absence talked of her.

"You might as well tell her the truth at once, Thomas Roach. Let her know she is a bound girl and nothing better, and has got to go right to work to earn her vittels and close," said the woman.

"Oh, no, not yet; it would be too much of a shock. Her guardian did not want *that*. He wanted it to be broke to her gradual like," said the man.

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"I don't believe she is going to earn her *salt*. There. And you may think it very well to be acting a deceiver's part, but what would your class leader think if you was to tell him? Answer me *that*, Thomas Roach."

"But, my dear, a case of—of—necessity like this—least-wise—if not a case of necessity, a case of mercy—"

"Hold your tongue, do! You have no consideration for me in my state of health. You make me as nervous as an oyster! And there—there comes the doctor!" said Mrs. Roach, as the village practitioner entered through the shop, leading little Nea by the hand.

"Good morning. Well, I think my little patient is nearly right now. She tells me that she felt giddy on first rising, but does not feel so at present," said the doctor, putting his hand kindly on the head of the little girl.

"Oh, *she's* well enough. But I wish you would attend to me, Doctor. I feel very poorly to-day," said Mrs. Roach irritably.

"Ah, I am sorry to hear that. What is the matter now?"

"Oh, they worry me so. Everybody worries me. I am just as nervous as—as an oyster."

"Ah, that's bad. I must send you something," replied the doctor, reserving to time to reflect what sort of a perfectly harmless mixture he could mix up for this selfish little hypochondriac.

He was very busy that morning, he added, and declining the seat that had been offered him, he bowed and left the house.

"Do you know how to wash dishes? Are you good for anything at all?" crossly inquired Jane Roach of the little girl.

"Oh, yes, ma'am, I can wash dishes," replied Nea, who, in the last year, when her sight had improved, had been

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used to help her mother in washing the fine china, which was never intrusted to the careless hands of servants.

"Well, then go in the kitchen and get a pan of hot water and a tea towel and wash up these things, so I can watch you and see you don't break them."

"Yes ma'am, politely replied Nea, wondering more and more at the rudeness of her hostess, and wishing heartily that her Cousin Neil would come and take her away. He could not be long *now*, she thought, for they had to set out on their return journey to Alexandria to be in time for the steamer that was to take them to Norfolk to meet the ship by which they were to sail for Liverpool.

She returned to the parlor with the pan of hot water and towel and began her task, her new mistress watching her closely, and snapping at her every few minutes.

When Nea cleared the table, put away all the crockery ware in a corner cupboard, and made the sitting-room tidy, all under the direction of Mrs. Roach, she ran out again to the front door of the shop to look up the street to see if her Cousin Neil were coming.

Thomas Roach was just entering from the street.

"Oh, sir," said Nea eagerly, "I want—I want my Cousin Neil! Can't I just run up now to the Eagle Tavern and see what keeps him?"

"My little girl, I have just come up from the Eagle, where I have been to deliver the beef and mutton for the dinner—which if it wasn't for the custom of the Eagle I couldn't manage to live no how, and don't live very well with it any how—"

"And did you see my Cousin Neil, sir?" anxiously interrupted Nea.

"No, my little girl, he hadn't got back there."

Nea stared at the speaker in silent dismay for a few seconds, and asked:

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"Not got back since he went on the mountain?"

"No, my little girl, not since he went away yesterday morning."

"Oh! *why* hasn't he come back? *Where* can he be? *What* can have happened to him?" inquired Nea, pale with fear and anxiety.

"Ah, my little girl, that is more than man can tell!" replied Roach.

"Oh! oh! Can anything have hurt him or *killed* him?" cried the child, in growing distress.

"Let us hope not, my little girl," said the man, putting her aside as he passed into the shop to take his place behind the counter.

"THOMAS ROACH!" shrieked a sharp voice from the back parlor.

"What, my dear?" responded the man.

"Send that girl right in here to *me*. She's got to know the truth, now or never. Come here you, Nelly Cross, or whatever your name is."

"Go, little girl, go! you had better mind what she says! She's inguns when she gets her temper up," whispered Roach, leaning over the counter.

Nea, trembling with an excess of anxiety, inspired by the woman's words: "She's got to hear the truth now," passed into the back-room, where the sharp-visaged and sharp-voiced little woman was still rocking nervously back and forth in her shabby little chair.

"Now, come here, Nelly, and stand right in front of me, and look me straight in the face."

Nea obeyed and raised her soft, brown eyes to meet the bright little black ones of the woman.

"Did you think your guardian was ever coming back for you?"

"Why, yes, ma'am! he was going to take me to Paris. to have my eyes treated," sobbed the child.

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"Your eyes again! There's nothing on earth the matter with your eyes, and there never was! And if your guardian told you he was going to take you anywhere he deceived you. He brought you here and bound you to us, for a servant, until you are eighteen years old, and he has left you here and gone back to where he came from! And now you've got the whole truth."

Nea shrank back and stared at the speaker in a sudden dismay, that turned her very lips white. Then throwing up her hands, and clasping her head she cried out:

"Oh, no, no, no, no! It is not so! It is not so! Cousin Neil would never do such a wicked, wicked, *wicked* act!" and sinking down on the floor, she fell into a paroxysm of the wildest anguish and despair.

"Good Lord! Stop that! you mustn't go on that way! Do you want to kill me with your tantrums? STOP THAT, I SAY!" screamed the "nervous invalid," showing a great deal of nervous energy as she flew at the prostrate girl, jerked her up on her feet and shook her vigorously.

Zora Roslyn's gentle child ceased her wild lamentations and tried to suppress her tears and sobs as the virago gave her a final shake and shoved her down on another chair, where she sat, gasping for breath.

Mrs. Roach sank into her rocking-chair, grasped its arms, and leaned back, overcome by the violence of her exertions, panting, groaning, and crying:

"Thomas Roach! Come to me directly! This girl you brought here has almost killed me! *I'll* pay her for it! Go in the yard and catch a chicken and kill it to make me some broth! I want something to support me right away, now!"

The obedient husband, glad to get out of his wife's presence, called to Tommy, who had just re-entered the

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door, to go behind the counter and mind the shop, and then he went out to do her bidding.

Little Nea, watching her opportunity, slipped out after him, and asked:

"Oh, is it true, sir? is it true?"

"What true? Don't begin and make another fuss."

"Is it true that my guardian has bound me to you until I am eighteen, and abandoned me?"

"Yes, that's true *as* true. Now, don't begin to make another fuss! If you do, you know, it will be the worse for you. Be a good girl and you'll get good treatment. You'll be sent to Sunday-school with the other children and taught to read. Now, wipe your eyes, and go in and try to please the ole 'oman. You gived her an awful shaking up just now with your row!" said Mr. Roach, who was engaged in picking the slaughtered chicken.

Nea, with one shuddering sigh, ceased to weep and sob; not that her sorrow was lightened, but that her paroxysm of excitement was exhausted.

She returned to the parlor, still too confused by anguish and despair to think how she should meet this great change in her life. She felt that there was no help for her in man; she prayed silently that the Lord would help her.

She saw lying on the old faded carpet the little valise that had been sent from the tavern, and that contained her night-clothes, combs, brushes, and pocket-handkerchiefs that she had brought with her from Alexandria. Its presence seemed a visible and tangible confirmation of the miserable truth of her betrayal into bondage and her final abandonment by her guardian.

"Take that thing and carry it up stairs, and mind you don't fall headlong down again!" sharply ordered the woman in the rocking-chair.

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Nea obeyed, ascending the ladder very carefully ; and when she had reached the garret—which was divided into three small rooms, one behind the other, in the same order as the shop, the parlor, and the kitchen below—she set down her bag on an old chest, and kneeling down beside it, buried her face in her hands.

She remained there, numbed by despair, until the shrill voice of her mistress called her down to perform some other service.

Nea scarcely knew how she wore through that heavy day.

She could not eat anything at meal-times.

When night came she was told that she might go up into the garret and go to sleep in the back room, which was nothing better than a bare, unplastered loft over the small kitchen.

It would be painful as needless to follow in detail the life of the little girl for the next few weeks.

She was worked very hard ; for Jane Roach never did anything, but direct and scold, if she could help it.

But there are few conditions so miserable as not to be ameliorated by some compensations.

Nea's eyesight had been wonderfully restored by the shock of her fall ; and the child, in all her trouble, rejoiced in the clear vision. She was also sent to the Methodist Sunday-school, where she was learning to read ; and in this privilege, so long desired by her, and so long withheld by blindness, she took great comfort.

But life was not prosperous with the Roaches. They had been long falling into debt for the very necessaries of existence.

They were also in arrears for rent, and their landlord had become importunate for his money.

So it happened that Thomas Roach, very much discouraged with his prospects, at length began to talk of

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moving to some city where, if he could not make his fortune as a master butcher, he might at least make a living as a journeyman.

And so, for the present, we must leave little Nea and take up that thread of our story which was dropped at Washington.

CHAPTER XXIV.

THE MIDSHIPMAN'S RETURN.

It was on a fine December morning, just three years and three weeks from the date of his sailing for the East Coast of Africa, that Midshipman Lance Roslyn returned from his long cruise.

His ship, the *Porpoise*, had anchored at the Navy Yard at sunrise that day, and as soon as he got leave he came on shore and hurried off to walk to New Jersey avenue to surprise his friends at Shadow Hall.

He was now a fine young man, twenty years of age, with a tall and well developed form, broad-shouldered, full-chested and straight-limbed. His hair had turned from flaxen to sunny brown, and his complexion from rosy to a ruddy bronze; his light blue eyes had grown darker, but had lost none of their boyish frankness and gladness.

His step was brisk, his air full of eager expectation, yet over his beaming countenance passed occasionally a shade of anxiety, which might have been deeper and more abiding had he not been blessed with a very sanguine temperament; for he had some cause for doubt.

He had not heard from his friends for more than two years, and the last letter he had received from them was six months old before it reached him.

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The time of cruising on the far distant Indian Ocean and China Seas had been a season of utter silence as well as of exile from home.

When he had last heard from his friends, by a letter received at Cape Town, everything at Washington was going on very much the same as when he had left the city, nearly a year before; and why might it not have continued to go on so for two or three years longer? he asked himself, as for the twentieth time, perhaps, since his landing his sunny spirit dispelled the clouds of uneasiness that gathered over him.

He hurried on, wishing that he could meet some acquaintance who could end his doubts.

But it was as yet very early in the morning, and the few people he met on the road were utter strangers to him.

As he passed over the Navy Yard Canal Bridge he began to whistle "Begone Dull Care," a new and popular melody of the day.

When he came in sight of the long row of tall poplar trees that stood before Shadow Hall on the opposite or west side of New Jersey Avenue he quickened his quick steps almost into a run, and soon reached the old-fashioned porch, with its rustic benches, and the black oaken door, with its fan-light above, and its iron dog's-head knocker.

As the reader has anticipated, Lance found his old home utterly deserted and desolate. He wandered through the grounds, trying to account, but in vain, for the unexpected condition of things.

He went out of the grounds by the side alley, and, after having closed and bolted the gate, he stood looking disconsolately up and down the avenue.

The houses opposite, where their old neighbors used to live, were evidently still occupied, for glimpses of flowing

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window curtains could be seen from the partly open shutters.

Lance might have ended his misery of suspense in five minutes by knocking at the front door of either of these houses and inquiring of the first person who came.

But he felt a strange reluctance to do this.

While he stood there, hesitating in his wretchedness, a negro man came slowly up from the direction of the river, trundling before him a wheel-barrow filled with buckets of lime and sand, trowels and whitewash brushes.

He stopped before the gate, took off his hat, and said, respectfully:

"'Mornin', Marse Capt'in. Lemmy go inter de alley, please, sir."

"Good-morning, uncle," responded the young midshipman, giving to the old colored laborer the title of courtesy generally accorded them. "Do you know where the Roslyn family, who used to live here, have gone?" he next inquired, as he made way for him to pass.

The old negro let go the handles of his wheel-barrow and scratched his head before answering:

"Well, I don't, Marster, and dat's de trufe. Der aint nobody libbed here for 'bout two year, I know, caze dere was a sign up to let all dat time, which it was only took down yisdy morning, and I was 'gaged to come and whitewash de walls and ceilin's, and my ole 'oman to scrub de floors and paints, for the new tenant," the darkey explained.

The young midshipman gave the old man a bright silver quarter for his information, received a cheap benediction in return, and then set out to walk down the avenue towards the wharf, with the intention of calling at Dr. Hamilton's office to make inquiries for his own absent family.

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In five minutes he found himself in the doctor's office, where the proprietor sat reading the *National Intelligencer*, and waiting for patients, which, at this early hour, were drawn from the ranks of the Navy Yard workmen on their way to their shops.

Now, when poor Lance was roaming through the deserted rooms of his old home at Shadow Hall, he had felt as if he had been absent at least a half a century; but now, on entering the family physician's familiar office, where everything remained unchanged, he felt as if he had never been away at all.

The cordial doctor, on seeing the young midshipman enter, sprang up and dropped his paper, exclaiming, as he grasped his hand:

"Lance, my dear boy. This *is* a surprise! I am so glad to see you! Sit right down here and tell me how you find yourself! You look uncommonly well!"

"Thank you sincerely, Doctor, for this warm welcome! Yours is the first friendly face I have seen and the first friendly voice I have heard since I landed this morning," said the young midshipman, gravely, and with questioning in every tone and glance.

"Ah! yes, yes, yes, it must have been very sorrowful for you to come home and find them all gone," said the doctor, sympathetically.

"But *where* have they gone?" inquired Lance, in an agony of suspense now, for the doctor's tone and manner gave new alarm.

Dr. Hamilton looked at him now in surprise and compassion.

"My dear boy, is it possible that you do not know?—When did you hear from your home last?" he suddenly broke off to inquire.

"Not for two years, and then the letter was nearly six months old. They were at that date all well and going

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on as usual at Shadow Hall, with no thought of change. I got the letter at Cape Town. Since that time, for two years, I have been cruising on the East Coast of Africa, on the Indian Ocean and China Seas," exclaimed Lance, speaking hurriedly, breathlessly.

The doctor dropped his head upon his breast and said nothing.

"For Heaven's sake tell me what has happened? Where have they gone? And little Nea? what of her?" vehemently demanded Lance.

"Little Nea is well, for aught I know. She is in Paris, or was there, having her eyes treated by the French oculists."

"Little Nea in Paris to have her eyes treated! That I know was the dream of her mother! Now I understand it all! Nea and her mother gone to Paris, and so, of course, the house on New Jersey Avenue is given up! But how did they get the means, and when did they go?" eagerly inquired Lance.

"My dear boy, Nea is not with her mother in Paris, but with her step-father, Mr. Neil Carnes—"

"'Her step-father, Mr. Neil Carnes!' *Nea's* step-father, Neil Carnes! You do not mean to say that my father's widow married a third husband!"

"It was by the advice of all her friends, and the event has proved it to have been a very judicious measure."

"She is happy with Neil Carnes, then? I should not have thought him capable of making any woman happy."

"She is happy, Lance!" very gravely replied the doctor, "as happy as it is possible for any faithful Christian woman to be. She is happy beyond the power of fate to make her otherwise. Zora Carnes is in heaven, Lance!"

"*Oh!*" groaned the young man, covering his face with his hands.

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There was silence in the office for a few minutes, and then the youth burst forth in a wail of sorrow :

"She so young, so beautiful, so lovely in every attribute! Why did she die so soon? She always had a presentiment of early death! Every one used to laugh at her for it! And now it is fulfilled! Now it is fulfilled!"

"A mere coincidence, my dear boy. Where one presentiment is accidentally fulfilled there are thousands *un*-fulfilled."

"And she left her child to the guardianship of Neil Carnes! And he has taken her to Paris to have her eyes treated! Well, I suppose it was very kind of him. But I never did believe Neil Carnes capable of a generous or disinterested act! I suppose I have been unjust to him."

"I think you have, if such have been your thoughts. He seems to have been as much devoted to Nea as if she had been his own and only child. She grew very fond of him. He sacrificed good business prospects when he took her to Paris in the hope of restoring her sight."

"How long has this been ago?"

"All that I have told you has happened within the last two years."

"All since I received that last letter, at Cape Town, which hinted nothing of this. But, then, indeed, it was six months written when I got it."

"Probably, when there was no thought of these changes," said the doctor.

"No, none," sighed the midshipman, adding: "I had, indeed, feared some changes had taken place during two years and a half of absence and silence, but dreamed of none so great as these. Where is Eldiva, Doctor?—Mrs. John Daw, I should say, but the old name comes more familiarly to my lips. Is she with her husband? Has

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he returned from his foreign travels, or has she gone abroad to join him?"

"Neither, my young friend. Mr. John Daw is still travelling with his father and their retinue—to the opposite ends of the earth now, I think, for when we last heard of them they were at Cairo, and were about to cross the Great Desert of Sahara."

"At Lord John Daw's age? Well father and son must be both equally mad," exclaimed the young man.

"My own opinion exactly," responded the elder.

"But my Cousin Eldiva. I left her under the protection of my step-mother and her aunt, Mrs. Roslyn. Where is she since the establishment at Shadow Hall was broken up?"

"She left Shadow Hall *before* the establishment was broken up. After the marriage of Mrs. Roslyn and Mr. Carnes, she found herself uncomfortable in the house and left it, being an independent spirited young woman, and took a situation as teacher in the Protestant Female Orphan Asylum on H Street."

"Eldiva, my Cousin Eldiva, teaching in an Orphan Asylum for her living!" exclaimed Lance Roslyn in astonishment.

"Yes, my dear boy, she is. In spite of the tears and prayers of all her friends, as I may say, she struck out to earn her own living in this way. I do not, for one, blame her."

"But I thought that Lord John Daw had made a handsome provision for her."

So his lordship *had*; but as his lordship had carried off her husband from her, she would accept nothing from his lordship's hands. And I, for one, do not blame her."

"But Eldiva had so many relatives who would gladly have given her a home."

"She had none upon whose protection she had any

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legal claim. And kind as they all were, the abandoned, humiliated wife did not wish to become a dependent on their charity."

"Her present position must be a deep mortification to her proud friends."

"I don't see why, I confess."

"A young lady of her rank!" exclaimed the midshipman.

The doctor shrugged his shoulders without reply.

"Do you know when Mr. Carnes is expected to return with Nea?" next inquired Lance.

"I do not, indeed, my dear boy. I never hear from them."

"Do you know what success has attended the treatment of her eyes by the French oculists?"

"No, I do not, my young friend. I repeat that I never hear from them. Mrs. John Daw, whom you will find at her post in the asylum on H Street, can probably give you all the information you require on that head," said the doctor.

This was not intended as a hint for the visitor that it was time to retire, though a pair of patients were waiting in the hall to consult the doctor in his office, nor did Lance take it as such; yet he arose to depart.

The doctor also arose, saying:

"Your ship is at the Navy Yard, I think you told me."

"Yes, sir; she cast anchor off there this morning."

"And what are your present prospects and intentions?" kindly inquired the doctor.

"I expect to have a short leave soon, and afterwards to be stationed on duty at the Navy Yard."

"Well, my boy, when you get your leave, I hope you will come and make your home with us whenever you are in the city," said the doctor cordially.

"I thank you very much indeed, sir, and I should like

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to come some time when you are disengaged, to hear more in detail the family history of dismantled Shadow Hall for the last two years, for this morning I have only heard, as it were, the head lines."

"Come any time you will, my boy, and when I have opportunity I will tell you all I am able to impart," replied the doctor.

Then they shook hands cordially, and the young midshipman left the office and turned his steps up the avenue for the long walk to the asylum, where he expected to find his Cousin Eldiva.

Breakfast was just over at the asylum; two of the elder girls, whose turn it was on that day to wash the dishes, were engaged in clearing away the table; the rest of the children were in the yard, enjoying their half-hour of out-door exercise, and making the most of it before the nine o'clock bell should ring them in to their studies, and the teacher was seated at her desk in the school-room, mending pens and setting copies; for, mind you, the day of steel pens and copper-plate slips had not yet dawned upon a benighted world, and goose quills were used for writing; tinder-boxes, with flint and steel, for lighting; and old-fashioned blunderbusses and horse-pistols for fighting; with all sorts of crude instruments for common uses.

Eldiva had mended all her quill pens and nearly finished setting her copies.

She had, in fact, just written the last one at the head of the first page in Minty Westcott's new copy-book—

"VIRTUE REWARDS HER FOLLOWERS,"

and was looking at it askance, with a doubtful mind, when one of the the girls ran excitedly into the school-room holding out a card, and crying:

"Mrs. Daws!" (the children always put an "s" to her name) "Mrs. Daws! Here's a captain in uniform come

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to see you at the front door, and told me to give you this."

Eldiva came down from the little platform on which her desk was raised, took the bit of paste-board, and read:

"*Lancelot Roslyn, U. S. N.*" and started and ran out of the school-room as if she had been the youngest pupil instead of the grave teacher.

She found Lance standing just within the hall door, which was closed behind him.

"Oh, Lance! my darling, darling boy! how delighted I am to see you!" she cried, throwing her arms around his neck; and to prove her "delight," she burst into tears and sobbed on his shoulder.

But, then, he was her double cousin, and even as a younger brother to her.

He held her close to his bosom and tried to keep from crying for company; but he could not speak a word.

"Oh, my dear! Come in! Come in! Oh, Lance, there is no one left now but you and me! Only you and me, of them all, dear Lance! Have you heard? Have you heard?" she exclaimed, as she raised her head from his shoulder and seized his hand to draw him into the parlor.

"Yes, Diva, dear, I have heard all—at least I have heard the worst!" he replied, as he sat down at one end of the horse-hair sofa, while she sank, white and breathless, on the other.

Then followed rapid questions and answers, comments ejaculations that need not be repeated, in full, as for instance;

"When did you get in?"

"How have you been, Lance?"

"Why have I not heard from you, Diva?"

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"Oh, Diva! How could you grieve your friends by taking so humble and inferior a position as this?"

And so on.

When all these natural questions had been asked and answered, and Eldiva had given a somewhat detailed account of the marriage between Neil Carnes and Zora Roslyn, and of the subsequent death of the poor lady; and the breaking up of the household at Shadow Hall, and the departure of Neil Carnes and Nerissa Lovel for Europe; and Lance had listened with almost as much emotion as if he had not heard the heads of this story from Dr. Hamilton; then Eldiva arose and said:

"Sit here, dear Lance, until I ring my children into school and get them in order, under the care of a monitress, and then I will return. I have still so much to tell you!"

"And I so much to ask you!" answered the young man.

Eldiva rang the bell that called in her children, got them seated at their studies, placed Caroline Hopkins, the eldest and steadiest of them all, in her seat, as monitress, and with a little injunction to them all to be good while she was gone, left them to the care of her young substitute and returned to her cousin in the parlor.

"First, dear Diva, I wish to ask if you are happy, if there is any hope of a reconciliation with your husband?" began Lance, when she stopped him:

"You are greatly mistaken, as well as all the world. There is no quarrel between me and my husband, not the slightest, not even a misunderstanding, and I look forward to some happy time in the future, when there shall be a blessed and a joyful re-union between us," she earnestly asserted.

"Well, then, I am very glad to hear that; but—I am

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puzzled!" said Lance, clearly showing his deep perplexity by looks as well as by words.

"Yes, you are puzzled no doubt, as are many people; and you must remain puzzled, as they must, for the present. There are circumstances that I cannot now explain; that I may not for years be able to explain, and my conduct and my husband's past conduct must remain a present mystery," said Eldiva, solemnly.

"But if there is no misunderstanding between yourself and your husband, if you look forward to a happy re-union with him, as you say, why do you not avail yourself of Lord John Daw's ample and very proper provision for you? It seems scarcely fitting for Mrs. John Daw to be filling such an inferior and humiliating position as this of a teacher in the Orphan Asylum."

"Lance! I might truly answer you that the care of the moral and mental training of these motherless little girls is neither inferior nor humiliating, but the very opposite of that. But Lance, I wish to impress upon you that this subject we have just been discussing must be *dropped*, *here* and *now*, and *never* recurred to again," solemnly concluded Eldiva.

"Very well. You know best. We will talk of Nerissa. There can be no objection to bringing *her* upon the tapis, I hope?"

"None whatever. Let us talk of Nea," amicably replied Eldiva.

"Did she go willingly abroad?" inquired Lance.

"More than willingly—eagerly, anxiously; for besides her desire to have her sight restored and to see foreign countries, she had an idea that she would be nearer to you and possibly meet you on the other side."

"Poor little Nea! Dear little Nea! And have her expectations in the first instance been fulfilled? Has her sight been benefited?"

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"It has been quite restored, I am happy to say."

"Then why has she been kept abroad by her step-father?" curiously inquired Lance.

"Well, you know her education was very backward—so very backward on account of her infirmity—and Neil Carnes has placed her in a French convent school to study. She likes it very much."

"You hear from her often?"

"Quite often, considering the uncertainty of the mails. Neil Carnes writes every fortnight, occasionally inclosing letters from Nea."

"'Letters from Nea?' She has learned to write, then!"

"Oh, yes! She has been in the French school more than eighteen months—in fact, ever since her sight was restored—and has made great progress there."

"Indeed, I am very glad to hear it, though I was at first so deeply disappointed at not finding her at home. I should like so much to see the child's letters," said Lance.

"Well, you shall have them. I will go and get them now," said Eldiva, as she left the room.

Lance arose and walked up and down the floor.

Eldiva soon returned with about a dozen letters in her hand.

"You will observe," she said, as she handed them, "that the first are the crude efforts of a new beginner, but they constantly improve in style, and the last are quite creditable performances. Look at this one, for instance, that I received last week."

Lance took the letter she selected, and after glancing at the superscription said:

"*This* would seem the work of an accomplished penman. It is like copperplate. I am very glad to hear of little Nea's brightened prospects; but I do not see where

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Carnes gets the money to support Nea at school and himself at Paris."

"Oh, he has an extensive newspaper correspondence which pays him well, and he translates for several publishers. Besides, you may have heard that a single man may live very comfortably on very a little money in Paris, and that there are excellent convent schools there that are quite inexpensive."

"I suppose that explains it," said the midshipman.

"And now, Lance, my dear, I must send you away. My time is not my own. Take these letters of Nea's and read them at your leisure. To-morrow is Sunday. Come, if you can, and spend the whole day. Come early and go to church with us," said Eldiva, rising, and holding out her hand.

Lance also arose, saying:

"Well, I will go; but oh, you don't know how desolate I feel, Diva! This is a dreary home-coming!"

"Yes, it is, poor boy! Where are you going now?"

"Back to my ship. I have no other place to go. To be sure, Dr. Hamilton invited me to his house, but I do not know that my presence there would be convenient or acceptable to the ladies of the family, so I shall return to my berth in the old *Porpoise*."

"Poor Lance! Why don't you go and call on your old friends, the Norths? You know that you are sure of a welcome there from ladies as well as gentlemen," said Eldiva.

"The Norths? What, are they still here?"

"Yes, but the general is not on duty. He has been placed on the retired list; but he is still occupying his house, The Poplars, on Greenleaf's Point."

"Oh, indeed! Well, I will go and see them. Is Imperia married yet?"

"No; you know the obstinate old gentleman's law, that

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no daughter of his shall ever marry until she is twenty-five years old? Well, he does not repeal it, and the consequence is that Captain Milo Yorke is still patiently waiting for the happy day to come. Good-by, now, dear Lance. I hate to drive you away, but I must, you see," said Eldiva, standing on tiptoes and putting up her lips for the parting kiss.

Lance gave it heartily, and then took up his cap, saying:

"This is the second time within two minutes that you have ordered me to go. I had better not wait to be kicked out, so I will be off. Good-by!"

Lance walked from H street to Pennsylvania Avenue, crossed it, and stood looking southward over the wilderness of marsh, scrub, and brush that lay between that and Greenleaf's Point.

"I reckon I might just as well take a bee-line to the river and follow the beach until I get to the Point," said the young midshipman, glancing down at his strong leather boots as if to guage their strength to tackle with the thorns and briars of that pathless tangle-brush.

"Well, I reckon I had just better take a bee-line," he repeated, as he set out at a brisk pace.

An hour's rapid walk brought him through to rather higher ground, called Brick Kiln Fields, on which the relics of the old abandoned brick-yard that had once been the property of his father, were strewn around in all directions.

Passing through this, with a sigh given to sad memories, he came to another scene of desolation—a row of two-story, six-roomed little brick houses, called the Twenty Buildings.

These had been originally erected to accommodate the workmen then in the neighboring brick-yard, and other

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brick-makers, whom it was supposed the rapid growth of the new city would gather to the locality.

But there was no rapid growth then nor for many years after, and the whole scheme was a failure. The projector of the enterprise had become bankrupt. The brick-yard fell into disuse, and the untenanted houses in the Twenty Buildings into dilapidation.

They were now given over to the poorest of Scotch and Irish emigrants, and they presented a most squalid and forlorn appearance, with their dingy fronts, broken windows, rickety doors, and mouldering floors.

The Twenty Buildings ran north and south, facing the east. But the morning sun, now half way to the zenith, and shining full upon them, brought little cheer to any there unless to the groups of ragged children that were playing upon almost all the door-steps.

At the lower end of the row there was a pump in front of the last house, and at this pump stood a girl of about fourteen years of age, who seemed to be clothed in but one garment—a coarse brown serge gown that clung close to her thin form all the way down to her bare feet and ankles—bare in the month of December! This girl had just pumped a large pail of water, and was standing, panting for breath, and resting, before attempting to lift her burden.

As Lance approached the spot he looked at her. How forlorn she seemed. Her dark brown curls, uncared for, straggled down each side her thin, pale face; but poverty and neglect could not destroy the beauty of the dark, tender eyes, or the elegance of the eyebrows, or the loveliness of the full, pouting lips.

The girl stood staring at the stranger with the half shy, dazed look of some children under such circumstances, until a sharp voice called from inside the door:

"You, Nelly!—you good-for-nothing, lazy, idle limb

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you!—how dare you stand gaping and staring there? You make me as nervous as an oyster! Bring that bucket of water in directly, or *I'll* give you something to remember!"

The girl started violently, lifted the pail of water and lugged it into the house.

"Good Heaven!" exclaimed Lance, as he strode on his way, "how that forlorn creature there reminds me of my own little Nea!"

CHAPTER XXV.

HAUNTING EYES.

The young midshipman walked on, haunted by the vision of those soft brown eyes, so wondrously like the beautiful darkened orbs of his beloved little Nea.

"What surprising resemblances there are in this world," he mused. "There was that young student I once saw at the Commencement of Georgetown, that was as much like Mr. John Daw as if he had been his twin; and yet they could have been nothing to each other, not even fellow-countrymen. And now here is this poor little beggar, so like my own little Nea that she makes my heart ache. Poor little, sick, half-starved and half-naked child! What can she have in common with my dainty and cherished Nea who is now being educated in Paris? Scarcely, indeed, the same humanity. Ah, well! I would like to give that poor little woman shoes and stockings, and a whole gown, if I might; but I dare say that virago who was screaming after her would take any voluntary offer of assistance as an insult. I—think I must contrive to do it somehow, though," he mentally added. as he strode on up Windmill Hill, and over it, and down again towards Greenleaf's Point.

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It was high noon when he came in sight of the arsenal buildings of glaring red brick, surrounded by its rows of cannon and pyramids of cannon-balls, with the glittering blue river behind, and the variegated late autumn woods of Maryland far beyond.

But his old friend was no longer in command at the arsenel.

The retired veteran lived at his handsome villa, the Poplars, which was situated in its own beautiful, shaded grounds on the river banks, not far from the arsenal.

To this place Lance turned his steps and entered the grounds by the small iron gate used by pedestrians.

A negro boy was lazily raking the fallen leaves from the well kept grass, which was still green.

"Why, hello, Gideon, is that you?" inquired the young gentleman.

"Law, Marse Cap'in, how yer scared me! I's moughty glad to see yer, dough!" exclaimed the boy, dropping his rake and running forward.

"Is the general at home?" inquired the midshipman, after shaking hands with the boy.

"Yes, Marse Cap'in, dey's all home. I'll run roun' and open de door for yer quicker'n any body else can. 'Deed, Marse Cap'in, I's moughty proud to see you!" exclaimed the boy, skimming over the lawn and disappearing around the rear of the house.

By the time that Lance had leisurely walked up to the front porch, the hall door was open and the boy standing, with a broad grin, ready to take his hat.

"Dis way, Marse Cap'in," said Gideon, opening a door on the left which admitted the visitor into a medium-sized, cozy parlor, where, in an arm-chair, between a table covered with books and papers and a bright wood fire in the open fire-place, sat the veteran General North, with his bald head and full gray beard bent over the

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newspaper that he held in his hand, and with his thin form wrapped in a flowered gown.

Down dropped the paper and up jumped the old man at the sight of his visitor.

"Why, my dear boy! How delighted I am to see you! When did you arrive? How do you do?" and so on, and so on—all this while the veteran and the youngster were heartily shaking hands together and smiling in each other's faces.

"Here, now, take this arm-chair opposite to mine. And, Giddy, go and say to Miss North that Mr. Roslyn is here," added the old soldier, as he turned to the negro boy, who was still grinning with rapture in the doorway.

The boy vanished, and the veteran returned to the midshipman.

"Now tell me about yourself, Lance, lad. How have you been? Ah, poor boy, it must have been a sad home-coming for you!" he added, with a sigh.

"Yes," sighed Lance, in a response. "I was unprepared for it! It was a shock to find Shadow Hall shut up and deserted; and then learn that my dear step-mother was dead."

"Not dead, Lance! Give up that form of expression. It keeps up a falsehoood. 'Our Lord Jesus Christ hath brought life and immortality to light.' 'Whoso liveth and believeth in Him shall never die.' The Gospel is full of life, and yet Christians continue to talk of death!" said the veteran, earnestly.

"I know it is a bad habit of speaking," assented the young man; "but what else can we say to express the event?"

"Well—'passed away' or 'departed;' and yet these are not really true either; for our loved ones who have risen from the material life have *not* 'passed away,' nor

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'departed,' nor left those who are in sympathy with them; they have changed 'in the twinkling of an eye,' from our bodily world to our soul world, and are, indeed, closer to us than ever before. Ah! here comes Imperia."

The entrance of Miss North cut short the disquisitions of the veteran.

There were more cordial greetings and then the conversation turned upon the midshipman's long voyage and other kindred matters.

At length the early dinner-bell rang, and the young man rose to go, but the veteran pushed him down in his seat again.

"Not a step will I let you go, sir! You are to dine with us, and then let me send for your traps. You are to make your home with us, young man, until you shall be ordered on duty somewhere else!"

Lance laughingly yielded to force, but explained that he must return to his ship before sun-set, as he had only the day's leave as yet.

The veteran took the youngster to a bedroom on the same floor, where the latter might brush his hair and wash his hands, and then led the way to the dining room.

The short December afternoon passed pleasantly, and then Lance took leave of his kind friends and went back to his ship.

It was a week before the midshipman got another leave, and then he got a furlough for three months.

Christmas was near at hand, yet the weather continued to be mild, clear and beautiful.

Lance had made up his mind to go down to St. Mary's county, in Maryland, to spend his Christmas with his relatives there.

He wrote to tell them that he was coming, and then he went around to bid good-by to his city friends, prom-

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ising each of them a visit of several days before his furlough should expire.

His last visit was to Eldiva at the asylum.

The lady received him as before in the parlor of the house; a bright wood fire was burning in the open fireplace, that diffused a pleasant glow over the bare floor, and the hard wooden chairs and tables.

"Well, Lance, I thought you would have been to see me before this," she said, as she handed her visitor a chair, and took another for herself before the blazing fire.

"Couldn't leave the ship for more than an hour at a time, Diva. But now I have got a furlough for three months, and I am going down to spend Christmas at Bloomfield Farm with Uncle Well's folks. Ah, Diva, how I wish you could go with me! Why can't you, now? Your children have a holiday at Christmas like other children, I suppose?"

"Only a short holiday, Lance. Besides, as they do not leave the house, they require even more care in holiday time than they do while in school."

"But wouldn't the matron take full charge and—"

"Mrs. Dunn, dear soul, would take double burden and do double duty for any one under any circumstances; but besides my objection to make the holidays a term of harder work for her, I have an insuperable objection to going into company even among my own dear friends and relatives."

"But why should you, Diva?"

"Because of my painfully false position among women. And now let that drop. You are answered, Lance," said the young lady, speaking in a hard, metallic voice not at all in harmony with her usually gentle mood and ever tender heart.

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"I am very sorry, Diva. Very sorry. But I cannot help it, I suppose," sighed the young fellow.

"No, you cannot help it; so do not let it trouble you."

"Is there anything I can do in the way of taking letters or messages to our friends in St. Mary's?"

"Yes—no—I really don't know. It all depends on what time you start, Lance," hesitatingly replied the lady.

"I did intend to go to-morrow morning; but if you want time to get up anything, I will wait over a day," promptly answered the young man.

"Well, I would like to send a box of good cigars to Uncle Jubal, and a new-fashioned dress cap to Aunt Joyce, and some gay bandana handkerchiefs to the colored folks."

"All right. I will take them with pleasure. And if you can buy them to-day, and let me call for them to-night, I needn't defer my journey."

"Thank you, Lance! but can I not save you the trouble of coming to-night by sending them somewhere to you?"

"Oh, yes, you *can*, if you don't want to see me again," replied the midshipman.

"You captious boy! I will punish your impertinence by compelling you to call in person for the luggage, and making it as large as possible. You can call for it any time this evening," said Eldiva.

"I will do so; and now, Diva, there is something else that had better be arranged by daylight."

"What is it, Lance?"

"I feel like doing something for these orphan girls here. What would the little imps like for Christmas presents, do you think?"

Diva hesitated and reflected.

"Now, don't say anything *useful*, because the asylum is bound to find them in every *useful* thing. Tell me

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something *playful* or *ornamental* that they would like," exclaimed the youth.

Eldiva laughed and answered:

"Every girl under thirteen would like a doll, I'm sure. Every girl over fifteen would like a gay ribbon."

"Ah! And the intermediate ages?"

"Would like dolls or ribbons, according to individual temperaments."

"Well, Diva, here is a twenty-dollar bill to make the imps happy," said the youth, handing a bank-note to the lady.

"But—" began Eldiva, as she took the money.

"But what, now?" demanded Lance.

"Is not this a great deal to spend on mere toys, Lance?"

"What? Christmas toys for a whole asylum full of orphan girls? I call it but little."

"From a millionaire, perhaps; but from a young midshipman with his small pay—" suggested the lady.

"Look here, Diva! I have no widowed mother or orphan sisters to support, as some of my brother officers have; and I have no bad habits of smoking, or dram drinking, or anything of that sort; so that I can afford to do this. And I prefer to give dolls and ribbons because they will be sure to get more useful things."

"Very well, Lance. Your gifts will certainly make the little ones happy."

"Well, and now there is something else that I want to intrust to you."

"Go on, Lance

"I want to commission you to buy shoes and stockings, and proper clothing for a poor, miserable little girl in the Twenty Buildings."

"Dear Lance, if you begin that sort of thing your pay will not go very far," smiled Eldiva.

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"'*Shiver my timbers*,' as the old salts say, but it shall go as far as it can in this work! But this is really a crying case of necessity, Diva, dear."

"Who is this girl? One of those good-for-nothing Wathens?" inquired the lady.

"*No-o-o!*" almost indignantly replied Lance.

"You said she was in the Twenty Buildings, and the wretched Wathens live there. That is why I asked."

"Well, she is not one of the Wathens. I don't know *who* she is, and I don't suppose I should care, only that she reminded me so much of our little Nea, though she may be a year or two older than Nea. She looks to be about fifteen."

"Well, Nea is not far from that age."

"To be sure! So she is! I had forgotten! I was thinking of Nea as I last saw her three years and a half ago."

"But this girl?"

"Oh, she was so much like Nea! Diva, did you ever meet a person that was so much like some one else that the likeness not only struck you, but struck you breathless with amazement?"

"*Yes I have*," replied the lady, in a low voice; and if Lance had not been so much preoccupied by his own thoughts he must have noticed her face grow pale as she spoke.

"Well, I have, twice in my life. The first time was at the Commencement of Georgetown College, when I saw one of the students that was a counterpart—a perfect counterpart—of Mr. John Daw! Why, I tell you positively, if they two had been dressed alike, and stood up side by side, I could *never* have told one from the other. And now, this girl. Well, to be sure, she wasn't as much like Nea as the Georgetown student was like Mr. John Daw, for she had a taller and thinner form, and a longer and thinner face, and a paler complexion, and even

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darker hair, and her eyes had a more steady and penetrating look than poor little Nea's wistful darkened orbs ; but still there was a touching look of Nea in that child which haunts me day and night, and makes my heart ache."

"Which of the Twenty Buildings does she live in ?" inquired Eldiva

"The house at the south end of the row, opposite to which stands the pump. You cannot miss it."

"But you don't know the name of the girl ?"

"No ; nor of the people she lives with. I fancy she is not their child. I fancy she is their servant, from all I saw. But you will inquire, Diva, will you not?"

"Yes, I will."

"You see, I might go myself, only I think, under the circumstances, it is better that a lady should go than a young man."

"Much better," asserted Eldiva.

"And take this ten-dollar bill to fit the child out comfortably, will you ?"

"Lance ! Lance ! there are city charities and church charities that are bound to provide necessaries for the destitute—"

"*Then why don't they do it?* No, Diva, this is *my* affair. Mine ; and I am my own master—twenty-one years of age my last birthday ! '*Mind that!*' as the Irish say."

"Very well, Lance, dear. I will be your almoner, and dispense your alms with great pleasure," said Eldiva, smiling on the generous boy.

"And now, Diva, dear, I will go. What time shall I call for the gifts this evening ?"

"Any time after seven o'clock. School hours are over at three. Then I shall go out to make purchases, and get back by six, which is our tea time ; after which I have to assist at the evening prayers, and at putting the younger

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children to bed. By seven I shall be at leisure. By the way, how do you travel?"

"As I have some little luggage I shall engage a gig, horse and man from Fuller's stables—the man for the sake of his taking the gig back at the end of the journey. Good-by, dear; I will be punctual," said Lance; and he kissed his cousin and left the house.

He also had some Christmas gifts to pack up for friends in the country.

He spent the afternoon at his work, and then went to get his tea at Fuller's, where he had taken a room for the night, and from whence he intended to start for St. Mary's in the morning.

Duly at seven o'clock that evening he presented himself at the asylum to take charge of the parcels to be intrusted to him by Eldiva, and after having received them he bade her a final good-by and left the house.

And long before even the early women of the Orphan Asylum were up, Lance was a mile or so over the Eastern Branch Bridge, on his way to Bloomfield Farm.

This was Thursday, just a week before Christmas.

On the evening of the next day, Friday, the Orphan School, like the others, broke up for the holidays, which were to last until the Monday after New Year.

On the Saturday morning, the first of the vacation, Eldiva went out to purchase the presents for the children of the institution with the money which had been left for that purpose by Lancelot Roslyn.

There was but one really good toy-shop in the Washington of that day. It was "Rachendorf's," the paradise of children.

Thither went Eldiva and made her purchases of dolls and candies, and having ordered the parcels to be sent to her address at the Protestant Female Orphan Asylum, she passed on to Mrs. Lanckpheirs' millinery store, where

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she bought many yards of bright-red, blue, yellow, green, purple and orange ribbons, to suit all complexions and tastes. These as they did not make a very large parcel, she put in her ample reticule, as the hand-bags of that day were called.

Then, wishing to lose no more time in dispensing the young midshipman's more important alms, she looked at her watch, and finding it was but a few minutes after noon, she set out to walk to the Twenty Buildings to look after the poor girl whose case had awakened the sympathies of Lance.

The way was long, and the shortest cut took her over the very same ground that had been traversed by Lance; but the day was very fine, cool, crisp, with no indication of winter yet, though this was the 19th of December, and Eldiva was a good walker, and as well shod for the expedition as her cousin himself had been.

She stepped out briskly from the avenue down one of the unopened streets and across the low-lying waste land already described as Frog Town.

It was even more passable now than ten days before, when the young midshipman's heavy boots had crunched through the dry brush. The ground was harder, the brush more brittle.

An hour's rapid walk brought Eldiva to Brick Kiln Fields, half a mile in the rear of Shadow Hall.

There she, too, sighed, as Lance had sighed, over the scene of failure and ruin.

Then she came to the Twenty Buildings—the half dilapidated wrecks of the row of pretty red brick houses that had been built for the homes of the brickmakers, but were now abandoned to squatters.

She passed down the whole row, smiling on the groups of children collected in the open doorways, wishing that she had brought her pockets full of gingerbread for

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them, and resolving that she would in future come provided with that cheap and easy means of giving pleasure to the poor little ones.

She reached the last house in the row, the house before which the pump stood, that Lance had given her as an index.

This house was the best one of the line. Its windows were all glazed, except in some few places where the missing panes of glass had been neatly replaced by clean newspaper pasted in. And the front door was on its hinges and well scrubbed.

CHAPTER XXVI.

A STARTLING ENCOUNTER.

But no one was in sight and the house was closed in front.

"Perhaps the family have moved away," said Eldiva to herself, as she stepped upon the little wooden stoop and knocked smartly.

The door was opened by a girl in an old brown serge gown that was too short for her, showing her bare ankles and feet and bare arms and wrists, and which clung so closely to her thin form that she seemed to wear nothing under it—a girl about fifteen years of age, with a slim, graceful form a delicate, pale face, a wealth of curling, dark brown hair, elegantly turned dark eyebrows, lovely dark brown eyes, a fine, straight nose, a sweet mouth and round chin—a girl with feet and hands small and elegant as any lady's.

Eldiva at the first glance recognized the girl as seen and described by Lance. She noticed also the striking

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likeness this girl bore to little Nea; but Eldiva had seen, she thought, even a stronger likeness between strangers, as in another instance cited by Lance.

She looked at the little girl for an instant without speaking, and then gently inquired:

"Can I see the mistress of this house?"

The immediate effect of her voice was magical. The girl started at its first tone, bent forward, listened, grew pale, and then exclaimed:

"*Oh, Diva!* Dear Diva! I'm so glad to see you! Don't you know me? Oh, Diva! don't you know me?"

"*Nea! Nea!* Great Heaven! Is this you? Is this indeed you? Heaven of heaven! How came you here?" gasped Eldiva, breathless with amazement.

"Oh, Diva! I am so glad to see you! Oh, thank the Lord for this! I thank the Lord for this!"

"But child! how came you here? Good Heaven! how came you to this pass? Where did you drop from into this bottomless pit?" cried the lady.

"Oh, Diva! I am so overjoyed to see you! I cannot tell you anything but this—I am so crazy with surprise and delight to see you!"

Here a sharp, rasping voice from within the house called out angrily:

"*You, Nelly!* Who are you standing talking to, at that door? Tell whoever it is to come in if they have any business, or to go away if they haven't!"

"Yes, ma'am," answered the child, changing color and beginning to tremble.

"Who is that?" sternly inquired Eldiva.

"Oh! she is Mrs. Roach, the woman Cousin Neil bound me to," whispered Nea, in a frightened tone.

"'*Bound* you to?'" inquired Eldiva, frowning darkly.

"Oh, yes! he took me hundreds of miles back into the country and bound me out to her and her husband, and

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then slipped away and left me. It was all deception. But, oh! Diva, never mind that now. You have come to see me, and I am so glad! Oh, so glad to see you. How did you know I was here, dear Diva?"

"I did not know it. My finding you was chance, or Providence. I thought you were in Paris. Why, my child, I have been getting letters from Neil Carnes, dated Paris, telling of the recovery of your sight and of your progress at the school in which he had placed you, and even inclosing letters purporting to come from you."

"They are all deceptions and forgeries. I have never been out of the country."

"Did you not think you were going to France when you bid me good-by, Nea?"

"Yes, of course I did. But when I got to Alexandria I was lured into Virginia, and then bound out and deserted."

Again the sharp voice from within the house sounded an alarum:

"*You limb, you!* Will you shut that door and come in, or must I come and fetch you? If I have to come after you, *I'll* make you rue the day! You good-for-nothing, lazy, idle *limb*, you, I'll give it to you! You make me just as nervous as an oyster."

"I must go. Oh, Diva! I must go!" said the trembling child.

"Come, then. I will take you in to this woman and then take you home with me," said Eldiva, clasping the hand of Nea and leading her down the passage to the open back door of the room from which the angry voice had come.

It was the kitchen, evidently, and it was neatly kept. The white delf ware and tin pans were all bright and clean, and regularly arranged on the well-secured shelves; the scant cotton curtain at the window was

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as white as snow, and the brick hearth was as red as the fire that burned in the open chimney.

In a shabby old rocking-chair beside the chimney corner sat a little, thin, cross-looking woman, clothed in a clean, dark calico gown, but without either cuffs, collar, or apron to set it off. She had a thin, sallow complexion, thin black hair, and sharp black eyes.

"You are Mrs. Roach, I believe? said Eldiva, approaching the woman, and still holding Nea tightly by the hand.

"Yes, ma'am, that is my name," said the woman, looking a little startled at the sight of the visitor. "And it —I didn't know it was a lady at the door, else I shouldn't have—called out so impatient. But that bound gal of mine is so lazy, idle, and good-for-nothing, that I never can trust her—standing talking with Tom, Dick and Harry, until she makes me just as nervous as an oyster! Sit down ma'am. Nelly hand the lady a chair, why don't you?"

"Thank you, I would rather not sit down. It is scarcely worth while. My business is with this young lady," said Eldiva, closing her fingers more firmly upon the hand of Nea.

"*Young lady?*" inquired Mrs. Roach in surprise and disapprobation.

"Well, young girl—if you like it better," said Eldiva.

"Well, then, I *do* like it better, if you will excuse me for saying so, ma'am; for I don't hold with this indiscriminate way of calling all sorts of gals young ladies. It turns their heads and sets 'em above themselves. Nelly go out in the back yard and see what the children are up to. Some mischief, I'll be bound! And little you care what it is, either! Go directly!" said Mrs. Roach, sharply.

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Nea started to obey; but Eldiva's hand closing firmly on her wrist, detained her, while she said:

"I told you that I had business with this young lady."

"Oh! You are a 'Piscopal, perhaps?"

"Yes, but—"

"I thought you was! There has been two other 'Piscopals here after here already; but I told them, as I tell you, ma'am, and no offence: I know my duty by my bound gal, and I send her to Sunday school myself. I have sent her regular ever since I got her bound to me. She couldn't read a word when she first came, nigh three years ago, when we lived up in Virginny, and now she can read her Bible as well as anybody in this world. So thanking you all the same, ma'am, you have no call to come to get her to go to Sunday-school."

"I am not here with any such design. I came to take this young lady home with me," quietly answered Eldiva.

"Eh!" exclaimed the woman, staring.

"I say that I am here to take this young lady, Miss Nerissa Lovel, home with me. By her mother's last will, I am her guardian, the only one present who has any authority over her. Nerissa, go and get your bonnet and come with me," said Eldiva.

"Don't you dare to stir out'n this house! if you do I'll flag you alive!" shrieked the little woman, trembling with excitement.

The child, who had started to go up stairs, now stopped and stood, pale and terrified, in the middle of the floor.

"Nerissa, my darling, have faith in me. Do as I tell you. I only have the right to give you directions here. To me only you owe obedience. Go and get your bonnet and come away with me," said Eldiva quietly.

"Yes, Diva, I will! I will obey *you*. I know you tell

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me the truth, I am not afraid! exclaimed the child, darting away.

"Come back—*you—you—you limb of the Old Nick!* Who is this woman that wants to take you away from a good home? Come back I say! Oh, *I'll* give it to you when I catch you!" exclaimed the irate woman, screaming after Nea; but as the girl was now out of sight and hearing, the vixen turned upon her visitor, demanding, in a very insulting manner:

"And pray who are *you*, I would like to know, ma'am, to come into a decent house like this to carry off our bound gal? Oh, *I* know you! For all of your fine airs! *I* know you? You are one of them flaunting Jezebels of the town that go about like roaring lions to entice young gals to their everlasting ruin!"

Eldiva made no sort of reply, took no sort of notice of this tirade, but walked serenely up to the window and looked out.

Her perfect calmness maddened the irritable little woman in the old rocking-chair.

"I'll have you took up before a magistrate for this! I'll have you sent to the work-house to pick oakum for this, as sure as my name is Jane Roach! *I'll* see if people like *you* is to come into honest people's houses and carry off their bound gals to the jaws of Satan! I will!"

Eldiva, looking out of the window, saw an old neighbor and friend going by. He was old Mr. Thomas Bowen, who had been county constable for the ward ever since she had first come to Shadow Hall. He was a most fervent Christian and estimable man.

It occurred to Eldiva to call him to her assistance. She tapped on the window to attract his attention. He looked up and she beckoned him to approach, and as he crossed the street she went out of the kitchen and up the passage to open the front door.

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"Well, my dear lady, what can Old Tom Bowen do for you?" demanded the genial old man, after he had given the "good afternoon" to his some-time neighbor.

"I wish you to come in this house to be a witness for me, and perhaps to enforce the peace," replied Eldiva.

"Why, this—is the home of my new sister in the church—Sister Jane Roach, who joined our meeting last Sunday, by letter from the church at Greenmont. She was 'pointed to my class, and I was just on my way to make her a visit when you called me."

"So much the better, Mr. Bowen! I am glad to hear you say what you do. You may perhaps be able to bring her to reason. Do you remember little Nea, our blind child?"

"Why, of course I do! What would ail me not to know her?"

"You haven't seen her for three years, remember."

"No I haven't, and of course she'll be a little older and bigger than she was then, but I should know the dove-eyed darling all the same."

"Thank the Lord! And now, Mr. Bowen, one question more: Do you remember being called in to Shadow Hall one day to witness the will of the late Mrs Zora Carnes?"

"Why, of course I do!"

"All right, then. Come in this back room with me!"

The old man came in, closed the door behind him, and followed the lady.

As they passed along the narrow passage the sound of an angry voice reached them from the rear room.

"Take off them things this moment, you jade! Go up stairs this minute and take them off! Oh! I'll cut your skin as fine as ashes when I get hold of you!"

At this very instant Eldiva opened the door and

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entered the room, followed by class-leader Thomas Bowen.

The virago was taken completely by surprise. With her claw-like, little hands grasping the arms of a rocking-chair she turned her head and stared at the new-comer.

"Good-day, Sister Roach, how do you do this morning?" was the calm greeting of the class-leader.

"Oh! Good morning, Brother Bowen! Sit down, Brother Bowen."

The old man took a seat, put his hat on the floor at his right hand, and stood his stout hickory stick between his knees.

"But don't ask me how I do, Brother Bowen! I have been that *tried*, this morning! Look at that bound gal there!" exclaimed the woman, pointing with her little, skinny finger to Nea, who now, dressed in her Sunday-school clothes—a clean but coarse blue serge, with a deep cape of the same, and a quilted, black hood—stood terrified and hesitating at the foot of the steps.

"Yes, I see her sister. Come here, little girl, and let me look at you," said the old man, mildly.

"Yes! Go to the gentleman, Nelly. And, Brother Bowen, I hope you will give her some good advice. Oh! she's a regular bad one! She's Nelly Ross, a bound gal that was bound to us three years ago by her guardian, one Mr. Carnes. We lived in Virginny then, but we brought her with us to the city about three weeks ago. And now, Brother Bowen, no sooner does she get in this city and get the *chance*, than she runs the streets and picks up all sorts of bad company; and here, this morning, comes this *fine lady*, who is trying to carry her off right before my two eyes to lead a life of sin! She must a knowed Roach was gone out to look for work, and I was alone and unprotected, when she come here, bold as brass, to take my bound gal from a respectable home to

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some cave of Satan! Talk to her, Brother Bowen! Show her the error of her ways!"

"I will speak to the little one as soon as you have done, Sister Roach."

"Well, then, I have done *now*, Brother Bowen. But I don't see as the 'Postle Paul gave any orders how women must keep silent in their own houses. If they must in the meetings, 'specially when they are *that tried*, like I am. And *you* needn't stay any longer ma'am! You must see *that* yourself. I've got a purtecter here who will see me righted!" said Mrs. Roach, turning sharply around on the lady.

But Eldiva, standing by Nea and old Mr. Bowen, took no notice.

"If you will allow me, Sister Roach, I will now speak to this little girl," said the class-leader.

"Well, speak, Brother Bowen. I hope she will listen to you. That's all," said Sister Roach, settling herself back in her chair for a rest.

Old Bowen set aside his big stick and took Nea between his knees, facing him, looked at her attentively, and then said:

"Do you know me, my little girl?"

"Oh, yes, sir; you are Mr. Bowen, the constable, who used to live in the little two-story white house on the same side of the avenue with us," replied Nea, with the instinct that she must tell all she knew.

"Yes, that is right."

"And Mrs. Bowen kept a candy shop in her front window, and sometimes you sold oysters," added Nea.

"Exactly. And now tell me *your* name."

"Oh, you know it, Mr. Bowen. It is Nerissa Lovel," smiled the girl, who felt that she was now safe.

"Exactly. It is Nerissa Lovel," said Mr. Bowen.

"It's a lie!" screamed the shrew, forgetful, in her

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madness, that it was her class-leader to whom she exposed her temper and used bad language.

"Sister! Sister Roach, my dear sister, 'Let your moderation be known unto all men.' 'Be angry, but sin not,' says the Holy Word," spoke this really religious old man, in a mild, admonishing tone.

"I'm *not* angry," shortly retorted the vixen. "I'm *not*. I never *let* myself be angry. I'm seeking sanctification, and you know it, Brother Bowen. Only 'Satan desires to have me, that he may sift me like wheat,' and so I'm tried. I'm *that tried!* And it is very uncharitable to say I'm angry. I thought you was a Christian, Brother Bowen. I did, else I never would have took *you* for a class-leader."

Brother Bowen answered not a word, but turned to Nea and inquired:

"How came you in this situation, Nerissa Lovel?"

"I tell you it's a lie. She ain't Nerissa—what's her name—nor nothing else but Nelly Ross," fiercely interrupted the woman. "And she was bound to me and Roach till she was eighteen, by her guardian, and she's got three or four years to serve yet. And I'll see whether anybody dares to take her out of my hands before her time's out!" raged the woman in the chair. But she was now raging herself into a state of exhaustion, which was one comfort. She sat back in her chair after this last blast and panted for breath. This gave old Mr. Bowen the opportunity to explain.

"Sister Roach," he said, gently, "you have been deceived. This little lady is really Nerissa Lovel, whom I have known ever since she was a baby; and this lady who has come to take her away has every right to do so, for she is the child's guardian, by force of her mother's will, to which I myself was a witness."

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"It's a plot! It's a plot!" gasped the woman in the chair; but she could say no more.

"The man who bound this child to you was an impostor, who, for some reason that does not yet appear, lured her into Virginia and left her with you," mildly continued the class-leader.

"It's a wicked plot! And you're in it!" groaned the woman.

"This lady, the lawful guardian of this child, has the right to take her away at once, and she must be allowed to do so without hindrance," continued the old man, without noticing the interruption of the woman.

"I won't give her up! I won't!" exclaimed Mrs. Roach, working herself up into a frenzy again.

"My dear sister, if you attempt to hinder the girl's lawful guardian from taking her away, you may get yourself and your husband into very serious trouble as the *accomplice* of her abductor! Let her go quietly. Sister Roach," said the old man.

"Oh, my Lord in Heaven! was there ever a woman so *tried* as I am!" whimpered the virago, who was beginning to be frightened.

"I think, Mrs. Daw, that you had better take Miss Lovel home with you at once," said Mr. Bowen, at this juncture.

"Wait till Roach comes home! Only wait till Roach comes home!" gasped the woman, again out of breath.

"*I* will wait until Brother Roach comes in, and I will explain the case to him. Believe me, sister, when he understands it he will be glad to be rid of it so easily," said Mr. Bowen.

"I thank you very much for the help you have given us, Mr. Bowen," said Eldiva, as she took the hand of Nea to lead her away.

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The old man simply bowed in response to the lady's words.

"Good-by, Mrs. Roach. *Please* give my love to Tommy and Rachy and the two little ones," said Nea.

"Begone, you cat! and don't dare to speak to me! Wait till Roach comes! We'll see! Here I'm an—an—unpurtected woman among a lot of ruffians! But wait till Roach comes! *He* shall see me righted, or I'll know the reason why. And when I *do* get you back, you limb! won't I make you rue the day!"

With these angry words ringing in their ears, the lady led the little girl forth from the house of bondage.

Out in the glorious sunshine of that fine December day. Nea clasped her friend's hand and turned to her a face radiant with happiness.

CHAPTER XXVII.

A STRANGE DISCOVERY.

Nerissa tripped along gayly by the side of Eldiva, keenly enjoying her liberty in the bright December sunshine.

"Nea, dear," said the lady, "I do not yet quite understand how it is that I found you in that position. I thought you were in Paris, with your sight restored. I thought you were at one of the best schools there, receiving an education, and that the letters I got, signed by your name, were written by yourself. And here I find you a bound servant, in a low, vulgar, miserable family. Oh, Nea, how did all this happen?" inquired Eldiva, nervously closing her hand upon the child's hand, as if in dread of again losing her.

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"Diva, dear, it is a hard thing to say, but Cousin Neil deceived us all! I cannot think why he should have done so. If he did not like to have the burden of me himself, he might have left me with you, as you wished him to do, for I was an orphan and fit for your asylum," replied the child.

"Tell me all about it, Nea," said the lady.

As they walked along the narrow foot-path leading through the old, deserted brick-yard, and through Frog Town towards the city, Nerissa told the story of her abduction; how, when she had bidden good-by to Eldiva, at the asylum, Neil Carnes took her to Fuller's Tavern, where they stayed all night, and in the morning took her by stage to Alexandria, where it was understood that they were to sail by the packet for Norfolk, to meet the clipper and embark for Liverpool; and then how Neil Carnes contrived to miss the packet, and took her up into the mountains of Virginia, as he said, to pass the time pleasantly until the next packet should be ready to sail.

"And you had no suspicion of foul play, poor child?" inquired Eldiva.

"No, none; how could I have? I thought Cousin Neil was *so* good to me," replied Nerissa.

"Go on, dear! Tell me exactly what happened up in the mountains."

Nerissa then told of their long journey by stage to the mountain hamlet of Greenmont; their arrival early on the morning of the third day; Neil Carne's proposal to leave her under the protection of an acquaintance, while he went for a day's exploration to the top of the mountain; and how Roach and his wife came to the tavern after her, and received her at the hands of her step-father, and took her home to their squalid house to spend the day.

And still nad you no misgiving?" inquired Eldiva.

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"None at all. I thought it was a miserable place, and I was very sorry for the poor people that had to live in it, and I longed for the day to be gone, so that Cousin Neil would come and take me away," answered Nerissa. gravely, and then falling into silent thought.

"Go on, my dear; tell me all. When did you first suspect that you had been the victim of treachery?"

"I don't quite know. I thought from the first that Mrs. Roach was very rude *to a visitor;* but then I reflected that they were all poor, ignorant people, and perhaps they knew no better, and it was their way; so when she ordered me around so sharply I obeyed her, and thought it would only be for a day," replied Nerissa, with a sigh given to the graphic recollection of her troubles in the Roach household.

They had reached the thickest part of the scrub now, and had to scramble through it before the conversation could be resumed. Then Nea continued her story, and told how she had been ordered to go up the ladder into the loft over the kitchen to put away bonnets and shawls, and how in her partial blindness she had missed her footing and fallen through the open trap-door to the floor beneath, and had lost consciousness from the shock.

"Great Heavens!" exclaimed Eldiva, indignantly. "Our cherished child to be subjected to such treatment."

"But that fall did me no real harm, Diva, dear; for when I came to myself in the morning I found that I had come to my sight also," said the child.

"Your sight, Nea! I perceived that your sight had improved, but I thought the process had been gradual, and that it was still incomplete," said the lady, stopping and turning around to look full in the child's eyes.

"No; my sight *had* been slowly getting clearer for years, you know, and up to the time that I fell through the trap-door and received that shock. Then, when I

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awoke from my stupor, I found my sight suddenly and completely restored. And I was *so* happy to be able to see that I felt as if I could bear anything else in the world. And I found I *had* a good deal to bear, too !"

"But, can you see so well, my darling? Come, let me test your sight. Look straight before you towards the north, and tell me what you see."

"I see a long stretch of dry brush and briar, reaching from here ever so far away to a long row of houses, with their backs towards us."

"That is the south side of Pennsylvania Avenue. You *can* see perfectly, Nea !"

"I can see the differences in the houses, too. Some are two-story, red brick houses, and some white frame, and some gray, and some yellow ; and I can see red and white clothes hanging on a line in one of the back yards."

"That will do, child. You can see quite as well as I can. Let us walk on now, and as we go you can tell me the rest of your adventures," said the lady.

Nea told how she had watched and waited for the return of her cousin Neil, until at length Mr. and Mrs. Roach rudely informed her that she would never see him again ; that he had bound her by indentures as a servant to them, to serve them until she should become of legal age, and that he had then left the neighborhood, not to return.

"Oh ! what a base, cruel, cowardly traitor. I never trusted Neil Carnes, but I never could have suspected him of such a depth of villainy !" exclaimed Eldiva. "Go on," she added, seeing that the child paused to gaze at her.

Nerissa then told of her grief and despair on discovering that she had been betrayed into bondage, and abandoned by her cousin.

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"And I thought of Joseph sold by his brethren, and how the Lord had taken care of him, and turned his captivity into good, and I tried to bear my fate. They were not bad to me. Mr. Roach and the children were almost always kind," added Nerissa.

"But the Roach woman was an imp, a vixen, a virago," indignantly exclaimed Eldiva.

"Oh, Diva, that was because she was *tried*, you know. She was never cross but when she was *tried*," said Nea, naively.

"It seems to me, then, that whenever that sanctified creature was in a most diabolical fury she called herself *tried*, and blamed all the rest of the world rather than her own bad temper. Well, come, let us dismiss her case; it is too bad to talk about. Tell me how you came to Washington."

"Oh, but Diva, she was not *all* bad. Indeed she wasn't. She sent me to Sunday-school to learn to read; and she gave me time to get my lessons, too. And she *was* sickly, poor thing; and that was the reason why everything *tried* her so. Why, she was just *as nervous as an oyster!*" said Nea, apologetically.

Eldiva turned with a humorous expression, and looked at the child inquiring:

"'As nervous as an oyster,' Nea? What do you mean by that?"

"Well, she *was*; she always *said* she was, any way," persisted the child.

"Then, of course, it must have been true. Now tell me how you came to this city again?"

"Mr. Roach couldn't make a living at Greenmont, and he was always talking about moving to Washington, where there could be a plenty of work when Congress should meet, and all the taverns and boarding-houses would be full of people; and he talked about it all the

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time that I lived with them at Greenmont, and at last, about six weeks ago, he started with all of us to come to the city."

"How did you travel, Nea?"

"All the way in his wagon. He did own a wagon and a pair of horses. And he packed all the bedding and some other furniture in the wagon, and we all started together—Mrs. Roach and the two smallest children rode in the wagon, Mr. Roach walked by the side of the horses, and Tom and Rache and myself walked most of the way."

"It must have tired you almost to death."

"Oh, no, it didn't! We children enjoyed it ever so much. The weather was clear all the time, and we came so slowly, because Mrs. Roach, poor thing, couldn't bear jolting, it made her as nervous as an oyster. *Now* what are you laughing at, Diva?"

"Nothing, love! Go on! You were saying that you enjoyed the journey."

"Oh, yes! that we did! There were loads and loads of walnuts and hickory-nuts, and hazel-nuts and chestnuts, and chincapins growing all along the road, and nobody to pick them, it seems! And we children almost lived on them, and we filled our pockets and tied up as many in handkerchiefs as we could carry, and we might have brought bushels of them in the wagon, only they rattled so when the wagon moved that Mrs. Roach, poor soul, couldn't stand the racket, it made her as nervous as an oys—Diva! if you laugh at me so, I can't go on!"

"I am not laughing at you *now*, Nea, dear; I am as quiet as—an oyster. Pray proceed. What else did you find to enjoy on the road!"

"Oh! everything? Such crowds of persimmons. The frost had touched them, and they were just as delicious as dates and tasted like them. And they went so well

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with the nuts. The nuts would have been too dry to live on altogether; but with the luscious persimmons, they just made a feast fit for a king."

"How long were you on your journey?"

"Eleven days. We started on a Tuesday and travelled until Sunday, when we stopped at Frostburg to go to church, and on Monday we started again and travelled slowly until we reached this city."

"Where did you sleep and eat on the journey?"

"Oh, we always slept at the first farm-house that would accommodate us when it grew towards night, and we got provisions from the farmers to last us all day while we were travelling. Sometimes Mr. Roach paid for our lodging and provisions, but most of the time the country people wŏuldn't take a cent off him. That was the way we travelled, and it was very pleasant. We got here on Friday. Mr. Roach got poor Mrs. Roach board in a cheap house in the Twenty Buildings, and we children lived in the wagon for a day until he rented that corner house where you found me, and then we went to work with Mr. Roach and moved all the furniture in and fixed everything up nicely, and even got the fire lighted and the table set and the tea ready before he went to bring Mrs. Roach home, because she, poor soul, couldn't stand the bustle of moving in; it made her as nervous as an oy—Diva! I won't tell you, you look so quizzical!"

"Go on, my dear, and I will be as calm as a clam! I hope the dear woman was gratified by your efforts to please her."

"No, she was *tried*. And Mr. Roach had to go out and get some compound spirits of lavender before she could be quiet."

"Ah! I should like to know what tried the dear saint on that occasion."

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"Well, she said the house felt damp and smelt musty, and she was sure she never could sleep in a strange house the first night anyhow, for it always made her as nervous as—" Nea stopped shortly, and looked into the face of her companion, but seeing that face impassibly grave, concluded her sentence—"an oyster."

"How long have you been here, Nea, dear?"

"More than three weeks—almost a month."

"You have been here all this time, in the city where you were brought up, and you have never attempted to let any of your friends know of your condition! How was that Nea!"

"Oh, Diva!" exclaimed the child, as the tears started to her eyes for the first time—"what friends have I got left? My dear mother in Heaven! Lance away at sea! Even the old servants off in the lower part of the country."

"But I was here, Nea! I was still at the asylum where you left me when you were taken away!"

"But it was so long ago! And you change about so often. I did not know that you were at the asylum. Indeed I did not think it at all likely that you were."

"Child, you might have inquired!"

"I had nobody to inquire of Diva! All these people here are strangers to me. And I was afraid to leave the neighborhood for fear of being taken up as a run-away; for, Diva, I thought Cousin Neil, being my step-father, was my *lawful* guardian and had the *lawful* right at least to do the cruel thing he did to me, in binding me out."

"Poor little soul! How long did you intend to bear your bondage?"

"I did not know, Diva. I prayed for deliverance every day, and I believed that it would come some day—as it has, you see. I always hoped that somebody would come by and see me, and know me, and get me away

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somehow. And now *you* have come, Diva. And now, Diva, dear, I have answered all *your* questions while I have been *aching* to ask you some."

"Ask them, my darling."

"When did you hear from Lance? My dear, dearest Lance! Where is he now? And when is he coming home?"

Eldiva looked at the eager, panting, expectant face of the child, and felt that she must answer cautiously.

"The last news we had from Lance was very good news. He was quite well, and full of affectionate solicitude for the friends he had left behind him."

"When was that? Where was he then? When is he coming home?" anxiously, breathlessly inquired Nea.

"It was a very few days ago. You know he went to the China seas for a three years' cruise."

"Yes, and he has been gone three years and five weeks. Oh, I know to a *day* how long my dear Lance has been gone. And it is time for him to be home now, and *over* time. He is *overdue*, as they say of the delayed mail packets. *When* is Lance coming home?"

"We may expect him very soon. He said he hoped to be in Washington soon after Christmas. And you know, Nea, he may come even before."

"So soon! Oh, so soon! Shall I see my dear, dear Lance, so soon? Oh, Diva, I feel as if I had come out of Purgatory and was on my way to Paradise! I hope it is not a dream."

"Listen, Nea. This is a very real reality. You are as sure to see Lance about Christmas time as you can be of any earthly event. Nea, I did not want to startle you, my dear, else I would have told you at once what I tell you now. Lance is within fifty miles of us."

"Oh, Diva! oh, Diva!" exclaimed the child, in great

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excitement. "His ship has been signalled, then. It is coming in! It is coming! I shall see Lance in four or five days!"

"Yes you shall see him in four or five days, Nea. But his ship is not coming in; it *is* in, and Lance is no farther off than Bloomfield Farm."

Nea stared as her eyes dilated with joy.

His ship reached the Naval Yard about ten days ago, and yesterday he left Washington to spend Christmas with our relations at Bloomfield Farm."

"Oh, let me go to him there, Diva! Dear Diva, send me down to dear Lance. Oh, do, do!" pleaded the child with panting eagerness.

"I shall do something better than that, my dear. I shall send a messenger down to bring Lance to us," replied the lady.

They had now reached Pennsylvania Avenue, which, at this late hour of the afternoon, was thronged with members of Congress on their way from the Capitol to their several boarding houses to dinner. And so the conversation of the two young friends became more subdued as they entered upon the thronged sidewalk, and crossed over, walking north towards H Street.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

A NIGHT EXPEDITION.

They soon reached the asylum.

"The children's tea is over with now, but you will take yours with Mrs. Dunn and myself. We have our private tables," said Eldiva, as she led the way into the house.

She took Nea at once up to her neat bed-chamber, told her to lay off her bonnet and cape, and brush her

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hair, and to wait there until she should return to take her down stairs.

Then, after hastily throwing off her own bonnet, Eldiva left the room and went down stairs to seek Mrs. Dunn.

She found the matron in their own cosy sitting-room, directing one of the elder girls how to arrange the dishes on the tea-table that stood in the middle of the floor.

"I had begun to grow uneasy, my dear, for fear that something had happened, though I could scarcely tell what," said the matron, with a smile of welcome to her young assistant.

"Something *has* happened, dear Mrs. Dunn. I have brought my young cousin, Nerissa Lovel, home with me," gravely replied Eldiva.

"Nerissa Lovel! Why, has she returned from Paris? This *is* a surprise! You did not expect her?" exclaimed the matron, astonished and sympathetic.

"No, I certainly did not expect her," said Eldiva, answering only the last clause of the matron's speech.

"And Mr. Neil Carnes her good step-father? He has brought her home, of course?" pursued Mrs. Dunn.

"No, Nerissa returned to Washington under other protection."

"Oh, and does Mr. Carnes remain abroad?"

"I presume that he does; but I do not really know," replied Eldiva; and although she spoke in a very gentle tone, yet Ruth Dunn's fine sense detected in it a reticence that seemed to delicately put aside questioning, so she made no further inquiries, but only said cordially:

"I am very glad Nerissa has returned for Christmas. What a delightful Christmas present her unexpected arrival is for you!"

"Thank you, dear friend. You are always sure to sympathize in all my joys! I came now to explain my

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long absence and to ask you to put an extra plate and cup for Nea."

"Why, certainly. And bring her in as soon as you can. I have some fine stewed oysters for tea, and they are ready to take up now," gladly replied Mrs. Dunn.

"We will not keep you waiting a moment," said Eldiva, as she flew out of the room, which she almost immediately re-entered, leading Nea.

Mrs. Dunn received the child with a cordial clasp of the hand and a warm kiss and placed her in the seat at the table which was nearest the cheerful wood-fire.

Nea's face was beaming with happiness.

"I see that her sight is quite restored," said Mrs. Dunn, smiling with sympathetic pleasure as she handed the girl a cup of tea.

"Oh, yes, quite," replied Eldiva.

"There are no oculists equal to those Parisian specialists, I suppose," continued Mrs. Dunn.

"I suppose not," assented Eldiva.

"How did you like Paris, my dear?" inquired the matron.

"I—don't know, ma'am," answered Nea, hesitating and glancing at Eldiva.

"Ah! of course, being restricted to your school and never going into company, you could not form any opinion! But at any rate, you are very glad to get home, I see."

"Oh, yes, indeed, I am!" joyfully assented Nea, with a radiant smile.

Meantime Eldiva was reflecting that her intended forbearance towards her Cousin Neil Carnes, and silence in regard to Nerissa's wrongs, must impose on both herself and her little friend a course of tacit deception towards Mrs. Dunn and others to which she could not

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reconcile her conscience; so she turned to the matron and said;

"Dear friend, Nerissa has not been in Paris, or even out of her own native country, all this time—

'And thereby hangs a tale,'

which I must tell you this evening. We must spare the child the discussion of her affairs until you know all, when she may speak freely."

Mrs. Dunn looked astonished, and even distressed, but made no other reply than a glance full of motherly kindness towards Nea.

But the little girl was much too happy to share the grave thoughts of her elders.

After the social tea was over, Eldiva inquired if the gardener—who was the only man servant of the establishment— had left the premises.

"No," replied the matron, "he is still at work putting away the wood."

"Then, when he has finished his task and had his supper, I would like to have him attend me on a walk that I must take down to New Jersey Avenue."

"What! To-night!" exclaimed Mrs. Dunn.

"Yes, to-night. The business is important, and it is not yet seven o'clock."

"Well, I will let him know," replied the matron, leaving the room for that purpose.

Two of the elder orphan girls were clearing away the tea table.

"We have no other room for ourselves but this, Nea dear; but this will soon be made tidy; and I will get you a book to read while I am gone," said Eldiva, with thoughtful kindness.

"Oh, Diva, dear, let me go with you. I am not the least tired, and I am afraid to lose sight of you yet a

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while for fear I should hear poor Mrs. Roach's shrill voice screaming after me, and I should wake up to find my happiness all a dream and myself in the Twenty Buildings! Let me go with you, Diva, dearest."

"Very well, Nea, you shall go if you wish to do so. Come with me first into the school-room. I have a note to write. Do you know where I am going to-night?"

"No, Diva," replied the child.

"I am going to get Dennis Butler to start for Bloomfield Farm this very night to take a letter from me to Lance Roslyn to tell him that you are here and to ask him to return to the city at once, so that he may be in time to spend Christmas with us."

"Oh, dear Diva, how good you are to me!" warmly responded Nea.

When they reached the bare school-room, with its whitewashed walls and wooden benches, Eldiva went to her desk and sat down and wrote the following short letter:

FEMALE PROTESTANT ORPHAN ASYLUM,
WASHINGTON, Dec. 21st, 18—,

DEAREST COUSIN LANCE—Steady now, I am going to shoot! Nea is here with me. She got home to-day, in good health and spirits, with her sight perfectly restored. Come at once and hear particulars, and spend Christmas with us. She is wild to see you. Excuse yourself to our relatives, and return with messenger. Love to all. Believe me, much more than you deserve, your loving cousin, ELDIVA.

She gave this letter to Nerissa to read, then folded, sealed and directed it, and took the child up stairs to prepare for their walk.

When they came down again, wrapped in warm shawls and wearing wadded hoods on their heads to protect them from the cold, they found old Uncle Abram, the colored gardener, encased in his thick, white flannel sur-

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tout, and with his fox-skin hat in hand, waiting in the front hall to escort them.

"It is too bad to take you out to-night after your day's work is done, Uncle Abram; but I will remember you at Christmas," said Eldiva graciously.

"Do'ne yer mention it, young missus. Do'ne make no sort o' diffunce to me. Allers ready to 'bleege de ladies, young missus. Tain' not a bit o' trouble!" replied the polite old negro man, opening his ample coat to fold it double across his breast before he unlocked the door to let the two girls out.

He then followed them, closing the door, which locked itself with a spring.

"Which way now, young missus?" he inquired, when all three had reached the sidewalk.

"To New Jersey Avenue," replied Eldiva.

And they set out at a brisk pace.

It was a cold, crisp, moonlight night, and the hoar-frost lay as white upon the ground as snow.

They rather enjoyed the walk through the exhilarating air, especially when they turned into Pennsylvania Avenue, which was then adorned with tall, spire-like Lombardy poplar trees, and lighted by whale oil lamps placed at long distances.

At this hour, also, the avenue was alive with promenaders, either enjoying a mild winter night's constitutional, or else on their way to some scene of amusement.

They walked down the avenue until they reached the Capitol grounds, and then turned to the left, for it was to the North New Jersey Avenue they were going.

"Do you know where Dennis Butler, the market gardener, lives, Uncle Abram?" inquired Eldiva, as they walked up under the north wall of the Capitol grounds.

"Hi! wot yer talking about, young missus? Does I know w'ere de corporation pump is! Course I know

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w'ere Dennis lib! *Dar* w'ere he lib—in dat dar two-story blue frame house yer see up on dat hill dar, wid a dreat big garden behind it!"

"Yes, that is the place. We are going there," smiled Eldiva.

They soon reached the house, and found Dennis and his large family all at supper over a pot of hominy and a leg of pork.

"Don't let me disturb you, Dennis. Finish your supper and then I will talk to you. I will sit here till you have done," said Eldiva, to the tall and strong young colored man who had come to the door with his mouth full.

"Bress my wits, Miss Eldivy! Is dis you, young missus? Come inter de parlor! How do Uncle Abram? You waitin' on de ladies, is yer? You'se hoped up in de ole ages ob yer pilgrimage, you is! An' who's dis little young lady? W'y, bress my wits if it isn't Miss Nerissy! An' how she's growed! Come in, young ladies! Come inter de parlor! I has done finish my supper—I has indeed, an' is quite at yer sarvice," said Dennis, with many bows and scrapes.

They entered a narrow passage which had three doors—a back door which, standing wide open, revealed the warm kitchen with its bright wood fire and long table, at which a negro woman and half a dozen small negro children were at supper, and whence the strong aroma of boiled pork and hominy poured like a steam; a door on the left, also open, and giving a glimpse of a little bed-chamber; and a door on the right, opening into a neat, rustic parlor, into which Dennis led his visitors.

"Sit down here, young missus," he said, standing his lighted tallow candle on the mantel piece between two green and yellow plaster parrots, and then drawing a hard-cushioned arm-chair, covered with bright-flowered

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curtain calico, up to Eldiva. "Sit down here and make yerse'f comfomable, and you, little mistis, you take dis t'other chair. And now, young missus, tell me wot Dennis can do for yer."

"Are you thinking of going down to Bloomfield Farm to see your father and mother this Christmas, Dennis?" inquired Eldiva, by way of opening negotiations.

"Well, young missus, I *was* a thinkin' 'bout goin' to see de ole people, 'cause it's moughty heavy on my mine as dey mought die 'fo' anoder Christmas an' me not see 'em again."

"Are you going, then?"

"'F'aid not, missus. Can't 'ford it.'

"Well, see here, Dennis. I have an errand down to Bloomfield Farm which is very important. I want it done immediately. So, if you will go immediately, I will pay for the hire of your horse and give you five dollars besides. Now, what do you say?"

"Glory to de Lord, Miss Eldivy! I say yes, an' thank yer, too, missus! Does yer want me to start ter-morrer?"

"I want you to start to-night! This is a fine moonlight night, a splendid night for travelling, and you are a fine, stalwart man who can well bear fatigue and loss of sleep. It is not yet eight o'clock. You can prepare for your journey and be off by nine. You can reach Bloomfield Farm by to-morrow noon, deliver this letter to Mr. Lance Roslyn, spend the day with your old father and mother, and the night with them also, for that matter, and the next morning, Monday, you can start on your return with Mr. Lance Roslyn, and get back here in time to keep Christmas with your family. Then, you see, you will visit your oid parents without losing your holiday at home. What do you say? Can you start to-night?"

"Miss Eldivy, ef I aint across de Eastern Branch Bridge

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on my road to ole Si' Mary's afore de clock strike ten to-night, nebber you make me no good offer agin!" said Dennis, blithely.

Eldiva gave him the letter for Lance Roslyn, and two five-dollar notes to pay for the hire of his horse and for his own time and trouble, and then arose to depart.

"I hope you will have good weather and a pleasant journey, Dennis. Remember me to your father and mother," she said, as she left the room.

"*That* I will, Miss Eldivy. An' you 'pend on Dennis Butler to fetch Marse Lance back to you by Tuesday mornin' first fing! An' you, Uncle Ab'am, you take care ob dese young ladies a walkin' home to-night! Don't yer let none ob dem riff-raff rabble o' Congressors speak to 'em on de abenue! . Yer ha'r wot I'm talkin' 'bout, dont yer?" he said, taking the old gardener by the hand.

"I h'ar yer, nigger, but I done fink yer knows who yer's talkin' ter right good! Tell me take care ob dese ladies? Who been takin' care ob dem all de time? Eh? Not you, shure!" retorted the old man, as he followed the two girls out of the house.

They walked briskly back up the avenue, which now, at half-past eight o'clock, was livelier than ever.

"How good you are to me, Eldiva, spending so much money for me," said Nerissa.

"That money was given me by Lance to spend for you, Nea, and I am sure I could not spend it in a way that would be more satisfactory to both of you than I have done," said Eldiva, gravely.

Nea pulled on the hand of her friend and stopped her in the moonlight to stare in her face.

"Lance gave you that money to spend for me!"she exclaimed in astonishment.

"Yes, he did. And Lance sent me to see you," replied

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Eldiva, amused at the amazement and perplexity of the girl.

"Lance sent you to see me!" she cried, with open mouth and suspended breath.

"Yes, he did. It was the last charge he gave me the night before he went away."

"Oh, then, if he knew that I was in the city, *why* did he go at all? Why did he not come to see me himself?" inquired Nea, in an aggrieved tone.

"He did not know that you were in the city. He thought, as we all did, that you were in Paris. Come, Nea, dear, I see that you are puzzled. Now, I will read the riddle to you. Ten days ago, when Lance first arrived, he was on his way to see General North, at Greenleaf's Point, when he passed the Twenty Buildings and saw you at the pump—in your working clothes, you understand. He did not recognize you, my dear. How should he? He thought you were three thousand miles away; he had not seen you for three years; he certainly did not expect to see you then and there; you had grown very much, and changed very much; but still there was something in the tall, sallow, bare-footed girl at the pump that reminded him of the dainty little lady whom he supposed to be receiving her education in a first-class French school; and he pitied you so much that he would have approached and spoken to you, had not a sharp, angry voice from the house called you harshly in doors."

"And oh! if he *had* come and spoken to me, I should have recognized him by his voice and his manner, and made myself known to him? And then he would have brought me away at once; he would have stayed with me, and not gone down into Maryland!" complained Nea.

"You noticed him, then, dear?" inquired Eldiva.

"'Noticed him!' Yes, indeed I did! I looked at the

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young man in uniform, and I *felt* the presence of my dear Lance, without knowing what it was that shook me so! and if he had come nearer and spoken, I should have known him by his tone and manner. But you see, Eldiva, *I could not* know him by sight, because you must remember that I had never seen his face, except as a white mist at the top of a shadowy figure, since I was a baby. I did not recognize even *you*, Diva, though you were face to face with me, until you spoke."

"I remember," replied the lady.

"How came Lance to give you the money to spend for me and to send you to see me if he did not recognize me!" inquired the child.

"Because you reminded him of his own little Nea, and so excited his sympathies, and he wished to do you good. He sent me instead of going himself, because he thought it was more delicate and proper that a lady should go on such an errand than that a gentleman should.

"Oh, my dear Lance! My dearest, best Lance!" muttered the child.

Walking rapidly through the crisp night air, they reached the asylum about ten o'clock.

All the children had long before retired to rest, but Mrs. Dunn was waiting up for them.

She welcomed them warmly, but as it was late they kissed her good night and went up stairs to Eldiva's room and went to bed—where, being very tired from walking, they soon fell asleep.

The next day, being Sunday, all went to church as usual, both in the morning and in the afternoon.

Monday was a busy day in the asylum, for they were all preparing for Christmas.

And it was an especially busy day for Eldiva and Nerissa, for in those days there were no ladies' ready-made

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clothing bazaars, and there were no sewing machines. All ladies' garments had to be made at home, or at a dress-maker's, and by the slow process of the hand alone ; so that it was rather a serious matter when a young lady without any sort of a wardrobe, except a very objectionable suit of clothing, dropped down upon a household as Nea had done.

Eldiva after some rapid reflection, concluded that the shortest way to go to work would be to alter some of her own dresses for Nea's use.

Eldiva had worn nothing but black and white for four years past ; and all her colored wardrobe, including her rich wedding trousseau, had been packed away in cedar chests during all that time.

Be it remembered that this young lady was a very minute little beauty, and at the time of her marriage, nearly five years previous, she had been as slender as Nea now.

So she took the child to her room on that Monday morning, and dismantled a large cedar chest that, draped with white dimity, surmounted by a looking-glass, and adorned with toilet boxes and scent bottles, was doing duty as a dressing-table ; unlocked it, and displayed its treasures of silks, satins, cashmeres, and velvet.

She found that the dresses very nearly fit Nea, and needed but very little taking in at the waist and shortening in the skirt.

" There, you may have them all, Nea ; and I am very glad that they have come into use, for I shall never wear anything but black so long as I live," said the lady, as she shook the rich dresses from their folds and laid them on the bed and over the chairs.

" O ! dear Diva, I am so delighted and thankful ! They are all *so* beautiful—too beautiful for me to wear now ! And oh ! Diva, dear, don't say that you will never wear

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anything but black—don't! When Mr. John Daw comes back—"

"*Nea, my darling!*"

Surprised and somewhat alarmed at the solemn tone of her cousin, the child started and stared at the lady.

"*Never mention that name to me again if you love me!*"

"I will not, then, Diva, for I love you dearly."

"Very well, then, darling, it is all right; and now let us look over these dresses. One of them must be altered for you to wear at Christmas, and another for other days. This must be done at once. Now choose two, my dear," quietly replied the lady.

Nea was a very young girl, still a child, in many respects, and she was expecting a visit from her lover; was it any wonder, then, that she became instantly and intensely interested in the question of dresses?

She looked fondly over the riches displayed before her, and then said:

"I think, Diva, I would like to have this crimson silk for a best dress, and this dark blue cashmere for a common one."

"Very well, my dear. I quite approve your choice. We will fix the crimson silk first, as you will need it for Christmas. Now help me to fold up all the other dresses and put them back in the chest. They are all yours, my Nea, remember that."

"Oh, Diva, dear, you are so good to me. I wish I could do something for you," said the child, stealing her arms around the lady's neck and kissing her fondly.

"You can *love* me, Nea, and you *do*; that is enough," said Eldiva, returning the caress.

"Oh, but if I could *give* you anything!"

"You can give me love, Nea; the most precious gift of all, and you do give it."

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"It is all I have to give," said the child, with a little sigh.

They put the clothes back into the cedar chest, closed, locked and draped it so that it became a dressing-table again, with white dimity cover and valance, gilt-framed looking-glass, shell toilet boxes, and porcelain scent bottles.

Then the two girls sat down and went to work to alter the crimson silk. They both sewed all day, and finished not only that, but also the blue cashmere.

Tuesday morning came bright and frosty.

Nea was very much exhilarated.

"Lance will be here before night, if he started yesterday. He may even arrive by noon, if he rides fast. And I *think* he will ride fast," she added.

After breakfast was over she dressed herself in her crimson silk, to do honor to the "distinguished arrival."

And very beautiful she looked with her slender, graceful figure, and her small shapely head, with its dark-brown, curling hair shading the delicate features of her clear, pale face, and her dark, tender, brown eyes. She had just finished her toilet by putting on a little India muslin fischu, which she crossed over her bosom and tied behind her back, and she had placed a white rose in its front folds, when a pleasant hubbub downstairs was followed by the sudden entrance of one of the elder orphans, who dashed into the room in a fit of sympathetic excitement, exclaiming:

"The capting have arrove, Miss! And Mrs. Daws say will you come to see him."

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CHAPTER XXIX.

LANCELOT AND NERISSA.

Nerissa flew out of the room and down the stairs. She was to see Lancelot—to see Lancelot whom she had not seen for more than three years. To see him face to face, *clearly*, as she never remembered to have seen him before. For in her blind infancy and childhood she had seen him only through a mist, in which his form appeared as a thick shadow, and his face as a dim cloud.

And how changed he must be. He must be much taller and stouter, as well as clearer to her vision now.

All these fancies sped like flashes of light through her mind as she flew on to meet him.

She was stopped in the lower hall by Eldiva who took her hand and whispered:

"Say nothing to Lance to-day about Neil Carnes' villainy or your own wrongs, dear Nea—"

"Oh, no, no, no! I will not pain him so," eagerly interrupted the girl.

"But let your meeting be one of happiness, unalloyed by grief or anger," continued the lady.

"Oh, yes, yes; it shall be so! It must be so!" vehemently exclaimed the girl.

"Of course it must be told; but let it be after dinner, so that he may enjoy the morning—"

"Yes, yes!" impatiently exclaimed Nerissa. "Oh, let me go to Lance, dear Lance."

"But he must be told some time to-day, so that he may get over it before to-morrow, which is Christmas, you know."

"Yes, yes," cried Nea, impetuously, as she broke

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away and ran into the parlor, where she suddenly stopped in the middle of the floor astonished.

Was that her own Lance? That broad-shouldered, sun-burned, and dark-whiskered young man in the naval uniform? her Lance, her own dear old Lance-boy.

It seemed impossible.

But in an instant her doubts—if she really had any—were dispersed by the young gentleman, who, in two swift steps met her and clasped her to his heart, murmuring, in deep emotion:

"Nea, dear Nea, dear little sister!" His voice broke down, and he held her in silence to his bosom for a few moments and then led her to the sofa, where they sat down side by side.

There he put her off a little way from him that he might gaze at her, saying:

"How much you have changed and improved, little one! And oh, how beautiful you are! There, I did not mean to say that at all; it broke from me unawares," he added, with a laugh; and though his lips did not repeat the words, yet his eyes, gazing with respectful tenderness on the young girl, continued to say: "You *are* beautiful, very beautiful, Nerissa Lovel!"

"Oh, Lance," she cried, trembling with joy, "I am so glad to see you! So very, very glad!"

"Oh, Lance, I am so happy, I am afraid I shall die, or something dreadful will take place! It is not natural for people in this world to be so happy, Lance, as happy as if they were in Heaven!" she said, after a silence of a few minutes.

"Dear little Nea! Darling little Nea! Not so little now, however. But *always* nearest and dearest. Do you remember those words, Nea?"

"Oh, yes, indeed I have treasured them up. I have treasured them up. And, oh, Lance, I do think I remem-

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ber every *serious* word you ever said to me in your life," replied the girl, with earnest, beaming face.

"Do you, love? And we have been parted more than three years. But you have recovered your sight. Have you perfectly recovered it, Nea?" solicitously inquired the young man.

"Oh, perfectly, dear Lance. And it is such a happiness to be able to see you!"

"Those French oculists are the most scientific and successful in the whole world; I believe that is generally conceded to them. How good it was in Neil Carnes to take you there, Nea. But he did not bring you home, Diva tells me"

"No," said Nea, evasively, and blushing at the evasion.

"I came to Washington under the protection of a family named Roach."

"Ah! had you a pleasant sea voyage?"

"I had a very pleasant journey all the way," answered Nea.

Lance did not notice the substituted word; but immediately inquired;

"Where is Mr. Neil Carnes now?"

"He is abroad, but I do not know where. He was going to the mountainous regions when he left me with the Roaches."

"Ah! Well, Nea, tell me how you liked Paris."

This question took the girl by surprise. She was unprepared to answer it; but as Lance was waiting for a reply, she at length said, hesitatingly:

"I like home better than any place in the world."

"Home?" Ah, poor girl! in Lance's presence she had forgotten that she had no "home;" but it is true that it is always

'Home where'er the heart is,'

and Nea's heart was with her own Lance.

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"You are a loyal little soul, Nerissa, and I do believe that all the splendors of Europe could not lure your love from us," said Lance, earnestly.

"Of course, nothing could. And Lance I will tell all about my travels to-morrow, or this afternoon, I mean; but now I want to hear something about *you*. Oh, you have been gone so far—quite around the world!"

"Yes, dear Nea; and I have seen many strange places and many curious races. And I have brought back mementoes of my voyages. I have a monkey and a parrot for you, Nea. I left them in the care of an old sailor, at the Navy Yard. I have also some China vases and ivory fans, and Canton crapes for you, Nea! They are in my sea-chest on board the *Porpoise*, my dear."

"Oh, Lance, how good you are to me! How good! Oh, I shall take such delight in the monkey and the parrot! And in the pretty vases and fans, and all! Tell me, do you *like* a sailor's life, dear Lance? Are you happy when you are on the sea? Tell me all about it!"

"Yes, dear, I like a sailor's life; and if it were not for the separation from all my dear ones, I should be perfectly happy at sea!"

"Tell me about it, Lance!"

The young midshipman smiled, complied, telling her of his long cruise and of the many East Indian ports he had seen, and of the China Sea and the city of Canton, and so forth and so forth.

Lancelot Roslyn, like all travellers, liked to tell of his voyages, and he had in Nerissa an attentive and interested listener.

They talked only on this subject until dinner time.

But the *one* thought that lay deepest in the hearts of the youth and maiden, was not uttered by either. This was the memory of Zora Roslyn. Strangely enough, each forbore to allude to her departure from this life, for

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fear of paining the other, at this their first meeting, after so long an absence.

When the dinner bell rang, for the private table of the matron and the teacher, it was Nerissa who arose with a smile and offered her hand to Lancelot, saying, humorously:

"We must reverse the order of etiquette a little, and it is *I* who must lead *you* into the dining-room, Mr. Roslyn!"

"I fancy it will be unnecessary, for I can find the way," laughed Lance, drawing her hand through his arm and marching off to join the two ladies at the table.

Two hours later in the afternoon Eldiva, Lancelot, and Nerissa were gathered around the open wood fire in the parlor.

Eldiva had been trying to summon courage to tell Lance of Neil Carnes's treachery and of Nea's wrongs; but as yet she had not succeeded, when Lance himself led up to the subject by suddenly inquiring:

"Well, Diva, what about the little girl in the Twenty Buildings? Did you succeed in finding her?"

"Oh, yes, I found her without any difficulty, and thanks to you who sent me to her; all her wants are provided for," replied Diva, while Nea dropped her eyelids and blushed up to the edges of her dark hair, for however unmerited her misfortunes might have been, it was very humiliating to her to think of them in the presence of the young midshipman.

Now Eldiva might have produced a highly dramatic effect, when she had told Lance that the wants of the poor girl of the Twenty Buildings had been provided for, by adding:

"There she sits," and pointing to Nerissa.

But Eldiva could not do this; she wished rather to avoid shocking the young midshipman, and to tell the

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story of Nea's bondage from the beginning, so that the climax might be gradually reached.

"Was the little one pleased with what you did for her?" inquired Lance.

"Very much pleased indeed, and very grateful; but, Lancelot dear, I will tell you all about *her* by and by; now I wish to speak of Nea, and tell you her little story from the time she bade me good-by in this very parlor, nearly three years ago, to be taken by her cousin and step-father, Neil Carnes to Paris."

"Yes, certainly I wish to hear that; but why cannot Nea tell me?" inquired the young man, smiling on his little friend.

"She can, if she pleases, of course," replied Eldiva.

"Oh, no, indeed, I cannot, Lance! Indeed I cannot, Diva! Oh, Lance, let Diva tell it, since it *must* be told!" impetuously exclaimed Nea.

"Very well, Nea. Go on, Diva, dear; but remember that I already know very much of Nerissa's Paris life from *her* letters and those of Neil Carnes, of which you placed a large packet in my hands for perusal. I have read every one of those letters, Diva," laughed Lance.

"Very well. I shall not bore you with the repetition of any facts that you have learned in those letters. I will, however, 'begin at the beginning,' as the proverb runs," said Eldiva.

And, while Lancelot listened attentively and Nerissa dropped her head upon her bosom and fixed her eyes upon her folded hands in her lap in a humiliation the most pathetic, because she was not in any manner responsible for her own wrongs—Eldiva began the story of Neil Carnes' villainy and Nerissa Lovel's sufferings.

It was curious to observe Lancelot's growing interest and rising excitement as the narrative progressed and

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the treachery of the false guardian appeared. Lancelot's eyes flashed, his teeth ground, his fist clenched.

At length he sprang up and began to walk rapidly up and down the floor, his breast heaving, his breath coming in short gasps.

"The scoundrel! The scoundrel! The atrocious villain!" he muttered, grinding his teeth.

"Oh, that I had him here. What could have been his motive?" he suddenly demanded, turning upon Eldiva.

"No one on earth can tell at present. That there *was* a motive, and a very powerful motive, is certain. But what it was remains yet to be discovered," answered the lady.

"And to think that the girl I saw in such poverty at the Twenty Buildings was our dainty Nea! Oh, oh, to think of that! Nea, love—Nea darling—don't look so distressed! It was your misfortune, not your fault. Your misfortune, for which I love you even more tenderly than ever before. Oh, my nearest and dearest!" said Lance, sitting down by the young girl and taking her head upon his breast.

"And now you have the whole truth, Lance," concluded Eldiva, when she had described her visit to the Twenty Buildings and her recognition and rescue of Nerissa.

"No, not the whole truth yet. But only so much of the truth as has come to your knowledge. We have not got the motive of that fiend Carnes yet. And, until we get his motive we will hardly know how to proceed. Why did he wish to put Nerissa out of the way where none of her friends would be ever likely to find her? And but for the accident of the Roaches moving from the Alleghanies to Washington, no one ever would have found her! Now, what could have been his motive? Have you no ideas on the subject, Diva?"

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"None whatever, I assure you. I have puzzled over the question until my brains are nearly addled," replied Eldiva.

"Nor you, Nea, dear?"

The girl shook her head.

"Then I shall go and see the Roaches," said the young man, grimly. "I may get a clew from them to this man's thought."

"Dear Lance, don't do so. They can tell you nothing, I am sure. They know even less than we do," pleaded Nea.

"It could not have been just to get rid of the expense of keeping you, dear, for he knew very well that Aunt and Uncle Wells would have received you with pleasure, or even Eldiva here."

"Yes, he knew that. Diva begged for me, and was only reconciled to my leaving her by the belief that I was going for my good," admitted Nea.

"I must go and question the Roaches," persisted Lance.

"Oh, don't, don't, don't!" pleaded Nea. "They know nothing—indeed they do not! And poor Mrs. Roach is so sickly it would frighten her nearly to death! Why, she is just as nervous as an oys—I mean she is just as nervous as she can be!" said Nea, correcting herself, and giving a quick glance at Eldiva.

Lance said no more, but privately kept to his resolution.

"Now, my dear Lancelot!" said Eldiva, gravely, "to-morrow is Christmas Day, when we celebrate the birth of the Prince of Peace—the day whose motto is, 'Peace and good will to men.' Therefore, Lance, 'Cease from anger, and forsake wrath; fret not thyself to do evil.' Come, dear; we have much pleasanter work in hand. You remember you made me your almoner."

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"Yes, Diva," replied the young man, with a tumultuous sigh, as the waves of his emotion subsided under her pacific hand.

"Well, you see one result," said Eldiva, with a fond glance towards Nerissa.

"Yes," said Lance with a smile; for he was under the pleasing impression that his ten-dollar bill had purchased the rich crimson silk dress that so well became the brunette beauty of Nerissa, but which really cost about ten times as much.

"I see that you are satisfied with that part of my mission," said Eldiva.

"Oh!" exclaimed Lance, in warm assent.

"Now for the other part. You remember that your gift to the asylum was to be invested in Christmas toys for the children—dolls and ribbons, as a matter of detail?"

"Yes."

"Well, I suppose you take but little interest in dolls or ribbons for their own sake, but as they are your gift, and as I have already lost a good deal of time in your cause, I must enlist your services to help me and Nerissa to label these presents for their prospective owners."

"Oh! of course, I will gladly do so. Parade the ladies and the streamers at once," laughed Lance.

"No; you have only got to write the labels. Nerissa and I will fix them on. Wait a moment," said Eldiva, as she hurried out of the room.

She soon returned, bringing a large, square book and a half quire of letter paper under one arm, and an inkstand, a pair of shears, and a bunch of quill pens in her hands.

These she placed on the table, and opening the book, said:

"Here is a list of the pupils. Copy their names on

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this letter paper so as to cut them in slips. This is your task."

Lance, pleased to be of use, drew a chair to the table and commenced work.

Then Eldiva went upstairs and brought down a large pasteboard box, full of dolls and rolls of ribbon, with a tape-measure.

"Now, Nerissa, dear, sit here with me and measure off and cut this ribbon into two-yard slips, and roll them neatly, and fasten them with a pin," said Eldiva, as she drew a side-table up between her own chair and that of Nea, and laid the box upon it.

The two girls then sat down and began work, Eldiva tacking the labels on the dolls as Lance handed them over to her, and Nerissa dividing and rolling the ribbons, which were also to be labeled in their turn.

The work was really play that inspired frequent jests and laughter, so that the afternoon passed merrily.

It was all finished and arranged in the box some little time before Mrs. Dunn's tea-bell rang. Then once more they went in together to the neat table presided over by the smiling matron.

Soon after tea Lancelot bade his friends good-night with a promise to return immediately after breakfast to assist in the distribution of his presents.

When he had gone, Ruth Dunn came into the parlor and sat down with Eldiva and Nerissa, saying:

"I would not interrupt you before, but now I have come to tell you of the loads of Christmas cheer sent in by the ladies; not only by the lady managers, but by other ladies—turkeys, mince pies, pound cake, boxes of figs and raisins, kegs of almonds and of water-crackers, more, indeed, than we can use in two months. The children will feast. Don't you smell the turkeys! I have four of them roasting now for to-morrow—two in

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each oven. And on the day after to- morrow I shall have all the rest roasted, if it takes all day, for they will not keep else. Why, do you know there are sixteen turkeys! More than we ever had given us at any former Christmas."

"I am so glad for the poor children's sake," said Eldiva.

Nerissa was looking on so eagerly that her dilated brown eyes shone like stars.

"What is it, Nea? You look really *hungry* for something or other; what is it my dear?" smiled Eldiva.

"It is for one of those turkeys! You have so many turkeys! And oh! I wish, I wish, I *wish* I had one to give to the poor Roaches!" vehemently exclaimed the girl.

"But, my dear, these were given to the asylum, and we have no right to give one of them away," Eldiva explained.

"Oh! but I WISH I had one for them! Poor Mr. Roach, who has no work, and poor Mrs. Roach, who is so sickly, and poor Tommy and Rachel and the little ones! They will have no Christmas at all, Diva! I know they won't!"

"The woman doesn't deserve any," was Eldiva's thought; but she only said:

"The children shall have some Christmas. It is late but not too late. I will send for a hack and you and I will take a big basket and drive down to the Marsh Market and buy a turkey and some cakes and fruit and take them to the family—what do you say?"

"Oh, Diva! I wish you would! I wish you would!" exclaimed Nea.

The gardener was summoned and sent for a hack.

Eldiva took Nea up stairs, that they might put on their bonnets and shawls.

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When they came out of their chamber they were met by Mrs. Dunn, who said :

"I want you to come into the clothes-room and look at the orphans' new winter Sunday suits that they are to wear for the first time to-morrow. They have just been sent in."

The two girls followed the matron into a large wardrobe room, with shelves and hooks all around the walls, and where half a dozen of the elder orphans were engaged in unpacking large boxes and hanging up frocks and capes and hoods. These were all of dark blue serge, and the capes and hoods were thickly wadded and quilted.

Eldiva and Nea duly admired the uniform and then went down stairs, and found the hack at the door.

They entered it, taking a large basket with them, and ordered the coachman to drive to the Marsh Market.

The road lay down H Street, and down Seventh Street to Pennsylvania Avenue.

The avenue was gay with preparations for Christmas.

They crossed it and drew up at the market on the south side.

When they got out of the hack they were confronted by the old gardener, who had just come down from his seat beside the driver.

"Why!—I didn't know that *you* had come along, Uncle Ambrose!" exclaimed Eldiva.

"Well, I has, den, honey! You dem didn't tink as I was gwine to 'low you young ladies to drive about at night in a strange hack wid so many Congressmongers runing' round loose, did yer?" demanded the old man.

"Well! I am very glad you have come with us, although I should not have asked you to take the trouble," replied Eldiva.

"'Deed, raly, I dunno wot you'd a done widout me, den! Gimmy dat basket, honey."

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CHAPTER XXX.

CHRISTMAS.

Eldiva handed out the basket and then gave her arm to Nerissa, and they walked into the market, followed and guarded by Old Ambrose.

The market was a "gay and festive" scene on that Christmas Eve night.

It was not lighted by gas, as now. In fact, it was not the handsome and substantial stone and brick building that it appears now under the name of the Centre Market.

It was but a long double wooden roof supported by posts, and having only in places a floor beneath; it was furnished with rows of rude stalls and heavy blocks, and it was lighted only by whale-oil lamps and tallow candles. In a word, it was not the fine Centre Market of to-day, but the old Marsh Market, or as the people called it, the "Mash" Market, of many years ago.

But it was as bountifully filled with meats, fish, poultry, game, vegetables, fruits, nuts, cakes, and everything else eatable and drinkable, and it was as well crowded with sellers and buyers, as the finest market in the finest city in the world.

Let any of my readers figure the gayest market they ever saw on a Christmas Eve and save me the trouble of describing this one.

Eldiva went to the poultry stalls, which were all in a row on the outside of the sheds, with flaring tallow candles in brackets over them.

She let Nea choose the turkey, and the inexperienced girl picked out the largest, fattest, and heaviest of the lot, in blissful ignorance that it was a venerable old gob-

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bler. *That* discovery was reserved for the Roaches the next day.

The turkey was paid for and put in the basket, and then Nea, who, in her benevolence, had no more consideration for Eldiva's pocket than she would have had for her own, if there had been any money in it, looked pleadingly in the face of her companion and whispered:

"*Poor* Mrs. Roach is *very fond* of pork and cabbage."

"'*Very fond*' of pork and cabbage! Oh, my dear Nea! how your language wants refining," thought Eldiva; but she did not express her thought; she good-naturedly inquired:

"Well! would you like to get some for her?"

"Oh, yes, dear Diva," eagerly replied the child.

The pork and cabbage were bought in addition to the turkey, the cakes, fruit, butter, and so forth.

When the basket was full, in passing out of the market they came upon a stall full of toys.

Nerissa did not say a word, but she heaved an eloquent sigh.

Eldiva understood her and said:

"You want me to buy some toys for those children?"

"Oh, yes, Diva! Yes!" exclaimed the girl.

"Well, select something for each one."

Nea, trembling with delight, got an accordeon for Tommy, a work-box for Rachel, and two dolls for the little children.

Eldiva paid for these, and looked with dismay at her nearly empty purse.

Then they re-entered the hack.

Old Ambrose took the basket up on the box between himself and the coachman, and the hack started.

Half an hour's rapid driving brought them to the Twenty Buildings and to the corner house occupied by the Roaches.

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There the hack drew up.

Everything was dark about the front of the house.

"They are all in the kitchen. There is where they stay almost always," said Nea.

"Now this is *your* affair, my dear Nerissa, and I want you to have everything your own way. Shall we get out and go in?"

"Oh, no, Diva! It would make poor Mrs. Roach as nervous as an oyster to see us. Let Uncle Ambrose knock at the door and hand the basket in and say it was sent by a friend," replied the girl.

"Very well," said the lady.

In the meantime Old Ambrose had lifted the heavy basket down from the box and brought it around to the carriage door.

"Take it to that house, Uncle Ambrose; knock and say to whoever comes that it was sent by a friend," said Eldiva.

"All right, young mistess."

"Wait a minute, Uncle Ambrose," exclaimed Nerissa. "Please you say that the accordeon is for Tommy, and the work-box for Rachel, and the two dolls for the two little ones."

"Jess so, young mistess."

The old man took up the basket and went to the house and knocked loudly.

The door was soon opened by a boy.

"It is Tommy," said Nea; and she bent forward to listen whether Old Ambrose would deliver his message aright.

This is what she heard:

"These here fings is sent to de fambly, wid de complimence ob a frien'—a well wishing frien'. An' de concordiance which is dis musical bellows-machine, is for Mr. Tommy."

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"Oh! that's me!" exclaimed the boy, seizing the accordeon from the hand of the old man.

"Don't yer be so fresh, young youth!" remonstrated Uncle Ambrose—then he continued: "Dis work-box is for—for—wot's her name ag'in?—de young gal wot's big 'nough to use it, I s'pose!"

"Rachel?" suggested the boy.

"Yes! dat's it—Rachel! Dis box is for Rachel. And de dolls is fur de little chilun. Dere! An' de rest ob de truck is fur de fambly in ginral. Dere, take um all in, and good night!" said Old Ambrose, unceremoniously emptying the contents of the basket on the passage floor.

"But who sent them all?"

"Frien's—well-wishin' frien's! Yer aint got no call to ax no more'n dat. *We-dem* don't go 'roun' blowin' of a trump afore us w'en we does our arms. Dere! Shet de do', boy, and take up de truck," said Uncle Ambrose, as he picked up the basket and returned to the hack.

"Jess so, young mistesses. It's all right!" he said, as he mounted to his seat beside the coachman.

The hack started again, and in another half hour they reached the asylum.

"Half-past nine! We have got through sooner than I expected," said Eldiva, as she looked at her watch after she had paid and discharged the hack and found herself and Nerissa once more in the parlor of the asylum.

"You don't know how good I think you, Diva! You don't know how I love you and thank you!" said Nerissa, putting her arms around the lady's neck and kissing her fondly.

Eldiva warmly but silently returned the caress.

"What can I do for you, Diva, dear? What can *I* do for *you?*" anxiously inquired the girl.

"If we go to bed *now*, before ten o'clock, do you think

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you can get up by daybreak to-morrow morning and go with me on a pious pilgrimage, so that we may get back in time for the children's breakfast and the distribution of presents which will follow immediately after breakfast?"

"Oh, yes, Diva! yes! Of course I can! Where are we going?"

"To the cemetery to lay wreaths of immortelles, our Christmas offerings on the shrines of our departed and beloved ones. We must remember them also at this season, dear Nerissa."

Oh, yes, indeed we must. I will go with you so willingly, Diva. And they, in heaven, will know it, will they not?"

"They will surely know our love, and our act will reach them in some spiritual and more beautiful way than it will appear here," said the lady, reverently, as she took up the lamp that had been left lighted for her and led the way up stairs.

They went to bed and slept soundly until they were awakened by the Christmas bells.

It was not yet daylight, but they had had about eight hours' perfect sleep, and so they arose quite refreshed to greet the new Christmas Day.

Eldiva struck a light and lighted the lamp, by which they dressed themselves quickly. They wrapped up warmly, and when they were quite ready to start, Eldiva took from a closet a round bandbox which contained the wreaths of immortelles with which she had previously provided herself, and they went down stairs and out to the sidewalk, where they found the carriage that they had used on the evening previous and that Eldiva had engaged to come for them at this early hour, standing at the door.

Eldiva gave the order—

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"To the Congress Burying Ground," and got in the hack, followed by Nerissa.

It was still dark, yet the Christmas bells were ringing in all the Catholic churches throughout the city.

Forty minutes' drive took them to the gate of the cemetery, just as the first red streaks on the eastern horizon heralded the coming of the sun.

The gates were not yet open, but Eldiva alighted and rapped at the door of the keeper's house, which fronted on the lane.

After some little delay the humpback appeared in answer to her summons.

"Good morning, Mr. Dee. A happy Christmas to you! I know it is too early to open the gates, but—I had not time yesterday to bring my wreaths, as I usually do on Christmas Eve, so I had to come this morning. And if you will let me enter through your house to lay these offerings on our shrines I shall thank you very much," said Eldiva.

"Certainly, ma'am. Walk in," replied the hunchback, opening wide the door.

Eldiva entered, followed by Nerissa, and passing through the house, came out by the back door into the cemetery.

They went to the grave of Zora, which was marked by an obelisk of white marble bearing her name as "the beloved wife of Neil Carnes," and the date of her birth and death.

Eldiva gave the weeping daughter two wreaths, which Nerissa placed, with reverent care, the one at the head, the other at the foot of the grave.

At that moment the rising sun gilded the apex of the obelisk and lighted up all the scene.

"See!" said Eldiva, laying her hand on the bowed head of the girl. "Weep no more! Look up! Behold this

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'outward and visible sign' of the resurrection—of the life immortal!"

Nerissa raised her eyes, suffused with tears, wiped them, smiled, and answered:

"Do not mind me, dear Diva! My heart does not ache, although I am crying. Sometimes one cries only from love and tenderness, not from sorrow. I know my dear, beautiful mother is happy in heaven! I know that in some lovely way she receives this offering. I even feel it *here*, Diva," added the girl, pressing her hand upon her heart. "And I will not drop another tear on this blessed Christmas Day!"

Eldiva took her hand and lifted her from the ground, and they walked on to that southeastern knoll on which was railed in the lot containing the two graves of the late keeper of the cemetery and of his father.

Eldiva laid one wreath upon the first-named grave, and then kneeling by the second grave, she laid on it two wreaths, the one at the head and the other at the foot, and bowing her head, she remained a few minutes in silent prayer.

Finally she arose slowly and gave her hand to Nerissa, and they walked away together.

Not until they were seated side by side in the carriage, rolling on towards the asylum, did either speak to the other.

Then Nerissa inquired in a low and deferential tone:

"Why do you lay wreaths on those two graves, Diva? What were these strange men to us? The old keeper and his son?"

"Dear Nerissa, some day, if we both live, I will tell you. I cannot now. Let the subject drop, darling," replied Eldiva.

They drove rapidly back to the asylum, where they ar-

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rived just as the children, all dressed in their new clothes, were forming in rank to march into breakfast.

Eldiva discharged the hack, threw off her bonnet, and took her place at the head of the happy procession, where every young face beamed with joy.

They were ranged in order at the two long tables, where even the breakfast, on this day of plenty, was a sumptuous feast.

All the children sat down together, and the matron, the teacher and their young visitor waited on the table, taking their own breakfast by sips and bites between services.

After breakfast the children were marched into the school-room, where they took their seats in their accustomed places, and where, on the teacher's desk, the Christmas presents were arranged.

Eldiva and Nerissa had but one regret—that Lance had not made his appearance; there was no time to wait for him on such a busy day; but just as the teacher had stepped upon the little platform on which stood her desk, a bustle was heard at the door, followed by the entrance of the young midshipman, who came hurrying up the room.

After a bow to Mrs. Dunn, he turned to Eldiva and Nerissa, grasped a hand of each, and wished them a happy Christmas, and said:

"I am late. I was detained, but I am just in time. What is my part in the programme?"

"Your part," said Eldiva, "is to hand the presents as the girls come up to receive them. Stand here on my left. I shall call out the names as I pick up the parcels.

She took the first that came to hand and read from the label attached to it the name of the girl for whom it was intended.

"MARY EVANS."

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A little blue eyed child of four years old left her seat and came timidly up to the teacher's desk, where she received a pretty doll, at which she stared in such dazed delight as to forget her courtesy, until gently admonished by her teacher.

Then, indeed, she dipped stiffly, and added gratuitously, as she raised her blue eyes timidly to the smiling midshipman's face :

" Sanky, sir, ezzer so much."

And she went back to her seat in rapture, to nurse her baby.

Eldiva took up the next parcel, read the label, passed it to Lance, and called out :

" Jane Hopkins."

A dark-eyed girl of fourteen came shyly and awkwardly up to the desk, and received a roll of cherry-colored ribbon, made the regulation courtesy, and retreated, pleased, but in silence.

And so on through the whole school until all the presents were distributed.

Then the teacher dismissed the children, and the matron led them off to the wardrobe-room to prepare to go to church.

" This was one of the pleasantest tasks that I ever had to perform," said Lancelot. " And now will you come with me into the parlor, where I left some parcels ?" he inquired, leading the way from the school-room into the parlor, where there was a roaring hickory wood fire burning in the open chimney that made the plain place seem bright and cheerful on this Christmas morning.

There was a table standing before the fire with chairs around and near it, and on it some parcels, large and small, done up in paper.

" Let us sit here, for I am tired, as the walk from Full-

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er's is not a short one, and I almost ran," said Lance, as he threw himself into a chair at the table.

Eldiva and Nerissa followed his example, and then Lance drew the largest parcel toward himself, untied and opened it, displaying a capacious Russia leather bag.

"I have brought you this, Eldiva, hoping that it may be useful, because I know you go out shopping for the school, and often come home with your hands full of small parcels. Will you have it?" he said.

"Why, you very thoughtful young gentleman, yes. I accept with thanks. It is the very article of all else that I need most. And with such convenient pockets," said Eldiva, as she unlocked the bag and examined its interior.

"And for you, dear Nea, to teach you the value of time and of punctuality, I have brought these," said Lance, as he opened a small parcel, took a gold watch and chain from the case and hung them around the neck of the young girl.

"Oh, you dear Lance, to remember how I always longed for a watch and chain," cried the girl, gratefully and joyously.

Lance smiled at her and opened a third parcel, containing a black lynx fur muff and tippet, saying:

"I want you to give these, with my love, to Mrs. Dunn."

"Are you a magician, Lance? How did you know the dear woman had no furs and needed them desperately?" inquired Eldiva.

"Well—I—guessed it all,' smiled the youth,

"And now, Lance, dear, your turn must come. Here, Lance, are twelve dozen linen handkerchiefs, all marked with your name. A monotonous number, dear boy, but, then, I fancy when you get to sea you will want them all."

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"That I shall, Diva, and use them all, and think of you every time I pick one up! Thank you, dear."

"Now, then, Nea, love, offer *your* gift," whispered Eldiva

"*You* please do it, Diva," murmured the girl.

"Lance, dear," then said the young lady, as she un wrapped a square parcel and displayed a Russian leather box, "here is something very handsome and handy which I am sure you have not yet met with, as it is quite new. It is a naval officer's dressing-case completely filled with the very best Sheffield. And notice its quaint label on the top; 'MORNING EXERCISES.' It is *Nea's* Christmas offering to *you*, Lance."

"Oh, what a superb gift!" began the young man, taking the case in his hand and opening it to admire its glittering appointments of shining steel and beaming ivory, and he was about to lavish grateful praise on Nerissa when the girl gravely stopped him by saying:

"No, no, no, no!—don't, Lance, don't! It was Eldiva who purchased that case and gave it to me so that I might have something to give to you. But, after all, I did not give it. I had nothing to give. Oh, how dreadful—how very dreadful it is to be poor when one wants to give!"

There was such a wail of passionate longing and regret in her voice that both her young companions looked on her in dismay.

Lance knew not how to answer her.

It was Eldiva who spoke;

"Dear Nerissa, give us your love. That is the most precious gift in the world, and it is all we want of you," she said.

"I do give you that! You know I do! But I want to be rich! Oh, I want to be rich, so I may have something to give—especially to Lance!" she wailed.

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The young midshipman put his arm about her and drew her to his heart as he whispered :

"*Nearest and Dearest*, when the right time comes I shall ask you to give me the most precious treasure that the world contains for me. I shall ask you to give me no less than yourself."

Something in the ardor of that pure embrace—something in the earnestness of those words, and tones, and glances—caused the girl to shrink and slip away from the youth's arms in a shy, half-frightened rapture.

"Have I distressed you, little Nea?" he whispered, bending over her.

"Oh, no, no, no, dear Lance, you have not! You never have!" she answered, trembling with happiness.

"And when the right time comes, Nea, and I ask you for yourself—" he whispered.

"I will give myself to you with all my soul, Lance! Why, am I not already your own, Lance? Haven't I always been yours? Did not my dear mother give me to you over and over again? And has she not left me to you? And oh, here!—here is something sacred that *was* my mother's, and that is mine, and I can give it to you now."

And the girl disengaged a plain gold ring from its ribbon around her throat and handed it to him.

The young man received it gravely, and gazed at it curiously.

"It was my mother's first wedding ring that my father placed on her finger. She took it off and laid it away for me, the morning she was married to your father, Lance. And before she died she gave it to me, and I have worn it on a ribbon around my neck ever since. The ribbon has been changed many times, but the ring never. See, Lance! It was too large for any of my fingers, for my dear mother had plump hands and mine

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are thin; but the ring will fit your little finger, Lance, and you must take it, because you see it is *all* I have of my very own to give you," she said, as she took the ring and placed it on the little finger of his left hand—the only one it would fit.

"I will wear this ring for your sake, dear Nea, and for the sake of her who is in Heaven, until that time for which I hope shall come, and then I will place it on your own finger, with a vow that shall be for time and eternity."

So earnest had been their conversation that they did not observe that Eldiva had left the room; but now the tumultuous descent of all the orphans from the upper floor, dressed in their Sunday suits, with wadded capes and hoods, to go to church, roused both from their *tete-a-tete.*

Nea ran up stairs to get her bonnet and mantle, and soon returned.

Lance was waiting for her in the front hall, and gave her his arm to take her out.

And they followed the procession of orphan girls that had already started for the church, headed by their matron and their teacher.

The Christmas Day passed off pleasantly, and the evening was spent in games, at which Lance and Nerissa assisted with as much enjoyment as did the orphans.

During the Christmas Holidays the young midshipman, who lodged at Fuller's, was a frequent visitor to his relatives at the asylum.

But after New Year changes and separations ensued.

It was decided that Nerissa should go to school to make up for much lost time.

The girl, who was all docility, suffered herself to be disposed of by Eldiva and Lance; and these two guardians placed her at the Academy of the Visitation at

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Georgetown, where she was to be kept at her studies, with the privilege of coming out once a month to visit her cousin Eldiva.

Nerissa was scarcely well settled at the Academy when Lancelot Roslyn received orders to report for duty at the Naval Station at Key West, on the coast of Florida.

So, after taking a tender leave of Nerissa at her school and of Eldiva at the asylum, the young midshipman departed for his post.

CHAPTER XXXI.

"TIME THE AVENGER."

Three years have passed since those memorable Christmas holidays which witnessed the return of Lancelot Roslyn from his long cruise and the rescue of Nerissa Lovel from her bitter bondage.

Three times has Christmas come and gone, with all its sacred services and its gay festivities, and the fourth Christmas is at hand, when we resume the thread of our story.

This interval has been so uneventful to the persons of this story that its history may be summed up in a few lines:

Lord John Daw and his party have been travelling in the Far East—that *Ultimate Thule* of modern times, which was the world of the past ages, but which is now seldom traversed, except by professional explorers.

Old Mr. and Mrs. Jubal Wells, of gay and festive memory have not grown a day older in aspect, or in character, and still keep open house at Bloomfield Farm for all their relatives and friends, all summer, and still come every winter to Washington, though now, and ever

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since the shutting up of Shadow Hall, they have been obliged to take lodgings at a "tavern." Public houses were not called "hotels" in the days of early Washington, they were either "inns" or "taverns."

Mrs. Dunn was still the matron of the Protestant Female Orphan Asylum. After hearing from her absent son once a month she had fallen into hearing from him once in two months, and now, since he had been travelling in the Far East, she heard from him only once in six months.

Time and habit had gradually reconciled Ruth Dunn to the prolonged separation from that only son which, had she anticipated it at the early hour of parting, must have broken her heart, or crazed her brain, or killed her quite.

Eldiva was still at her post as teacher in the Protestant Female Orphan Asylum. The problem of her life was still unsolved. Yet she found peace, if not happiness, in the quiet routine of her duties.

For some time she had received letters from Lord John Daw and his son, but as these remained unanswered they gradually ceased to come.

She continued, at regular intervals, her visits to the mysterious grave in the Congress Burying Ground, of which she gave no explanation.

Neil Carnes had never been heard from and his whereabouts was a mystery to his relatives—for friends he now had none.

Eldiva had seized the first opportunity of informing Mr. and Mrs. Jubal Wells of his treachery towards Nerissa; and in answer to one of his fraudulent letters, enclosing another forgery, purporting to be a letter from Nerissa in Paris, she had written back only these words:

"You need not burden your soul with any more crimes on our account. Nerissa is found, and is in the hands

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of her legal guardians, who have placed her at school at the Academy of the Visitation in Georgetown. We do not anticipate that you will trouble her there; but if you should return to your native country, you will be provided for in the State Prison."

Old Mr. Jubal Wells, to whom Eldiva had confided the story of Neil Carnes' treachery and Nerissa Lovel's wrongs, told her that she had been indiscreet to write in such a strain to the absent villain; and he said further that she should have waited patiently and received all the fraudulent letters he choose to write to her, and that she should have kept them carefully, giving him, so to speak, "rope enough to hang himself" withal;—effectually, piling up evidence against a day of judgment—"wrath against a day of wrath."

But this young lady was too honest, too spirited, too impulsive, to be such a time-server, and so the sharp, stinging, terrible letter was written and dispatched, and the result was that Eldiva was troubled by no more communications from Neil Carnes.

Nerissa Lovel had remained all these years at her school, where she had studied so perseveringly and to such advantage, that, at the close of the third year, she had graduated at the head of the highest class.

Since her graduation she had continued at the Academy as a parlor boarder until such time as her guardians could make some other provision for her.

Lancelot Roslyn had remained at his post at the naval station at Key West.

Only three times, and each time at Christmas, had he obtained leave to visit his friends in Washington.

On each of these occasions he had met Nerissa at the Asylum, whither she always came to spend her Christmas with Eldiva.

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This was the aspect of affairs with our friends on the 20th of December, 18—.

It was a clear, cold, frosty night, with moon and stars shining with preternatural brilliancy down upon a landscape of frosted silver.

Within the parlor of the Asylum the atmosphere was warm and ruddy.

The room was more comfortably furnished than when we saw it three years ago. There was a crimson carpet on the floor, and crimson curtains at the windows.

There was a fine hickory-wood fire burning in the open chimney, with a bright brass fender before it, and a pot of chocolate simmering on the hearth.

There was a pretty eight-day clock on the mantelpiece, whose hands pointed to the hour of half-past nine.

In two arm-chairs, placed at a table before the fire, sat Ruth Dunn and Eldiva Daw, engaged in some light needle-work, and otherwise resting after their day's labor was over.

The children were all in bed, and the house was closed up for the night.

Ruth Dunn glanced up at the clock and sighed.

"It is too late now to hope for a letter to-night. Yet I did *feel one coming* after I saw in the *Intelligencer* of this morning that the ship *Bombay* had arrived with mails from the Indies. Ah, well! 'Hope deferred maketh the heart sick' indeed, but it never kills, else I should have been dead long ago!" concluded the lady, as she picked up and renewed the sewing that she had dropped for a few minutes on her lap.

"There is scarcely time yet for the mails to have reached Washington and to have been distributed I think that to-morrow is really the earliest day that we

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have any reason to expect the foreign mail. Cheer up, Ruth, dear!" said Eldiva, smiling.

"Dear girl, I do not easily give way to despondency, as you know, but—"

"*Rat-tat-tat-tat-tat!*"

A resounding rap at the front door startled both women and stopped their talk, and Eldiva ran out into the hall to answer the knock.

It was John Scofield, the Quaker letter-carrier, with a full mail-bag.

"Good evening, Friend Eldiva! It is a cold night, and growing colder. I think the river will be frozen over before morning. I have a handful of letters for thee and for Friend Ruth," said the carrier, diving into his bag and trying to look over the letters.

"Do come into the parlor, Mr. Scofield. I am sure you cannot see anything in this darkness," exclaimed the young lady, in a fever of impatience, as she led the way and opened the parlor door.

"Verily, I will follow thy counsel, Friend Eldiva. The light and warmth of thy habitation is very comforting to the outward man. Good evening, Friend Ruth. Verily, I am late this evening. This season doth crowd the mails, and the arrival of the East Indianman—"

"Have you letters for *me*, Mr. Scofield?" impatiently demanded Ruth Dunn, who had risen to meet the carrier and cut short his slow speech.

"Yea, verily I have, Friend Ruth!" replied the Quaker, taking his mail-bag off his hip, placing it upon the table, and sitting himself down unceremoniously in one of the arm-chairs.

Both the women stood anxiously bending over him while he selected and handed out the letters.

"Three for thee, Friend Ruth, all foreign letters,

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brought by the *Bombay*, thee sees," he said, handing a trio of bulky packets to the elder lady.

"And two for thee, Friend Eldiva, but not from foreign ports," he added, passing a couple of letters to the younger lady.

Eldiva glanced at their superscriptions and postmarks, saw that one was from Key West, in the handwriting of Lance Roslyn, and the other from Bloomfield, in that of Mr. Jubal Wells. Then Eldiva looked at the cold and shivering postman, who had again slung his mail-bag over his shoulders and was preparing to sally forth once more for his long tramp through the frosty night, and she said:

"Mr. Scofield, won't you let me give you a cup of hot chocolate? See! we have a pot of it all ready made on the hearth."

"Verily, Friend Eldiva, I will accept the same with thanks," gratefully replied the carrier, as he subsided into the arm-chair with a sigh of satisfaction.

Eldiva went to the glass corner cupboard and took out a large china cup, which she brought to the fire, filled with the rich, luscious, steaming beverage and presented it to the postman.

"Verily, this doth greatly comfort the inner man, Friend Ruth," said Scofield, turning to the elder lady.

But *she* was too deeply absorbed in the letter she was reading to hear what he was saying.

"Shall I fill your cup again, Mr. Scofield?" inquired Eldiva, repressing a smile of amusement with which she had witnessed the man drink down the almost boiling chocolate at a draught.

"Yea, verily, if it pleaseth thee, Friend Eldiva, for even as Esau was saved by the mess of pottage, for which he did not deem the price of his birthright too high, 'for all that a man hath will he give for his life,' even so do I

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feel that my strength is sustained, so that I am saved by this beverage which thy hand hath prepared," said the postman, with another deep sigh of satisfaction, as he passed the cup.

Eldiva filled it to the brim and gave it to him, with the fervent hope that he would swallow its contents as quickly as might be consistent with his safety, for she was eagerly impatient to read her letters.

But the letter-carrier drank off this second cup more slowly, stretching out his feet before the blazing fire, and warming them between the sips, as he meditatively remarked:

"The beverage brewed from the cake called chocolate, and manufactured from the nut of an Indian tree, doth long retain its heat. This taken within the inner man will keep the outward cold from penetrating. Friend Eldiva, I thank thee," he said, setting down the empty cup at last.

As soon as he had gone and she had locked the front door after him, Eldiva ran back into the parlor, threw herself into a chair, and opened Lance's letter, from which dropped a check on the Bank of Washington for twenty dollars. The letter itself was very short and ran as follows:

U. S. STORE SHIP CERES,
KEY WEST, FLORIDA, Dec. 13th, 18—.

DEAREST DIVA: Too busy to write much now. Only write to tell you that I shall be with you on Christmas Eve, at latest. Please have Nea in time to meet me.

I inclose the usual check for the Orphan Children's Christmas presents, on my usual conditions, that is—*Don't* get them anything useful or improving—*don't*. Orphan children in "institutions" are, as a rule, utilized and improved into a state of idiocy or hypocrisy. So don't buy them pious pocket-handkerchiefs, or story books about good little children who were ill very long and died very young. Our Divine Saviour, when He

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was on earth, never preached to little children; they could not, perhaps, have understood preaching. "*He took them in His arms and blessed them.*" They could understand *that.*

So let me leave the higher *role* of instructing, improving and utilizing the orphan girls to you and the matron and the lady managers, and do the humble duty of delighting the little ones. Give dollies to the babies, and ribbons to the girls, or whatever they like best.

I have got my lieutenancy and a three-months' furlough, and when I reach Washington City I shall ask our dear Nea's permission to place upon her finger that sacred ring of her mother's which she entrusted to my keeping. And you know what that means.

Remember me to Mrs. Dunn, and believe me ever your affectionate cousin, LANCELOT ROSLYN.

"This young gentleman has contracted the vice of a very careless and frivolous style of writing, against which I must warn him. And, I suppose, now that he has got his promotion, he wants to marry Nerissa—taking his bride out of the convent; quite in the old-fashioned French form. Well, perhaps it is the best thing, under the circumstances, that could be done. They are both young, but not too young. And the girl cannot board forever at the convent. So I think we shall have a wedding," Eldiva reflected, as she refolded Lance's letter and opened that of her uncle, Jubal Wells, which was not at all an exponent of that jovial old gentleman's real character, or an expression of his best feelings, but a specimen of the stilted, formal style of his own age and time.

Uncle Jubal was natural and delightful in his family circle, and in conversation: but the instant "he took his pen in hand to avail himself of the opportunity"—and he *always* did this when he wrote a letter—he became artificial and ceremonious—as follows:

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BLOOMFIELD FARM, ST. MARY'S COUNTY.

TO MRS. JOHN DAW.—*Honored Madam and My Dear Niece*: I take my pen in hand to avail myself of this favorable opportunity of writing to you to inform you that your aunt, myself and our household are all in excellent health, and to express our sincere hope that you, our dear niece, and all your worthy friends are enjoying the same signal blessing for which, as for all other mercies, we ought, at all times and in all seasons, to return most humble and hearty thanks to the bountiful Giver of every good and perfect gift, and in Whom, as the Word tells us, "we live and have our being."

Madam and dear niece, I have the honor to notify you that early in the new year your aunt and myself, together with our personal attendants, propose to give ourselves the pleasure of proceeding to the City of Washington, not only to gratify our hearts by personal intercourse with those who are bound to us by the closest ties of kindred and the strongest bonds of friendship and esteem, but also to enlarge our minds by conversation with those great men of intellect, both in the President's Cabinet and the diplomatic corps, and by attending the deliberations of our Country's Representatives and Senators in Congress assembled; for, madam—as it must clearly appear to a lady of your excellent judgment—it is the bounden duty of every citizen to make himself familiar with the politics of his Age and Nation.

There is another matter of interest, Madam, which it will become necessary to discuss with you in a personal interview, to wit:

I have recently received letters from London, giving very important information concerning a certain person of the name of Carnes, formerly of St. Mary's County, in this State, with whom we—I beg pardon, Madam—with whom I, once had the misfortune of holding some acquaintance. I must apologize for recalling this person to your recollection, an offence which I should not presume to commit, but from the most absolute necessity.

But we will postpone this subject until I can have the honor of paying my respects to you in person a few days hence.

I will notify you, Madam, of our arrival.

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Your aunt desires to be particularly remembered to you. Be pleased, therefore, madam, to accept the most earnest assurance of our united love and respect for yourself, and believe, Madam, that I have the honor to remain your affectionate uncle and most obedient servant,

JOHN JUBAL WELLS.

"News of Neil Carnes!" mused Eldiva, ignoring every portion of this stilted letter except the few lines that alluded to Nerissa's false step-father—"News of *him!* I am very sorry for that. We do not want news of him. And Uncle Jubal is nearer right than he knows when he begs my pardon for mentioning the man's name."

The loud striking of the clock caused her to look up.

It was eleven o'clock, a whole hour beyond their usual bed-time.

"Ruth," she said, looking towards her companion, "shall we drink our chocolate and go to bed now? It is growing very late, you know."

But Ruth Dunn paid no attention to this appeal. She sat with her elbow on the edge of the table, and her head bowed upon her hand, either in a sound sleep or a deep reverie.

"RUTH!" again exclaimed Eldiva, in a louder voice.

This time the elder lady looked up, but with a face so blank, so dazed and expressionless, that the younger demanded:

"Why, what is the matter with you, Ruth? Are you in a trance, or under a spell, or what?"

"I—I—what did you say, my dear?" slowly inquired the matron, with a bewildered look, as she passed her hand across her eyes, as if to clear away a cloud.

"I hope you have received no ill news, Ruth," replied Eldiva, in a low voice, and totally ignoring the previous question.

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"'Ill news?'—I—yes—no—I—yes—that is, no, no, certainly not, no ill news. Quite, quite the contrary," replied the matron, at first speaking confusedly, and afterwards clearly.

"I hope your son is well?" said Eldiva, still doubtingly, as she noticed the matron's disturbed manner.

"Oh, yes, he is well, very well, and so also is Lord John Daw and Mr. John Daw," added Ruth.

"I asked no questions concerning the last named gentleman," coldly remarked Eldiva.

"I—I beg your pardon, my dear, if I have been indiscreet," said Mrs. Dunn,

"Well, then, Ruth dear, since you have had no bad news, and it is going on towards midnight, shall we drink our chocolate and go to bed?" good-humoredly inquired Eldiva.

"Certainly, my dear," replied the matron, taking her letters from her lap and putting them into her pocket.

Eldiva brought two cups from the corner cupboard and filled them from the pot on the hearth, and handed one to Ruth Dunn and sat down with the other.

When they had emptied their cups, Eldiva washed and replaced them, while Ruth took down the fire and put up the guard before the chimney-place.

Then the two women lighted their bedroom candles, put out the lamp, and went up stairs together.

Their bedrooms were on opposite sides of the upper hall. They bade each other good-night at the head of the stairs, and each entered her own apartment.

Eldiva was soon in bed and asleep.

But not so was Ruth Dunn. The matron set her candle down on the corner of the bureau, drew up a chair, seated herself and took her packet of letters from her pocket. Two of these, the most voluminous, were quite old letters; one, dated the 20th of the preceding March,

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came from Ispahan; the other, dated the 30th of May from Cabul. And these were filled with accounts of the writer's travels through the interior of Asia. Ruth Dunn had read them, and now she laid them aside.

The last letter was of more recent date and nearer place—Algiers, October 1st—and it was shorter than the others, and treated only of family matters. Ruth had read this also She had read it several times over. It was this letter that had sent her into the trance-like reverie from which Eldiva had found it so difficult to arouse her.

And now she read the letter again. We will look over her shoulder and follow her eyes:

ALGIERS, Oct. 1st, 18—.

MY BELOVED MOTHER.—We are at this port waiting for a packet to take us to Marseilles, whence we shall sail immediately for the United States.

Yes, dear mother, we are certainly coming home at last.

How long Lord John Daw might have remained abroad had not an unforeseen event directed his thoughts homeward, I cannot tell. But now he is all impatience to leave this oldest of old worlds for the newest of the new ones. And in that "unforeseen event" to which I have alluded, you and I, dear mother, have a vital interest.

I must write very guardedly now, lest by some chance this letter should miss you and fall into other hands.

Dearest mother, can you think of *any* event happening to our party out here that could so vitally affect the interests of yourself, your son, and Lord John Daw, as to cause his lordship to hurry his return to the United States?

Think where we have been travelling—over the very same ground travelled more than twenty-five years ago by the eccentric explorer, Prince Alexander of Schwartzenburg and the wretched companion of his flight, Lady John Daw.

Now do you guess what I have to tell you? No, I think not. It is this, then: That Lord John Daw has received unquestionable proof that his guilty and unfor-

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tunate wife *was* really murdered by the Bedouins of the Desert, as was first reported, and that the woman carried off and sold into slavery was *not* Lady John Daw, as was afterwards rumored, but her ladyship's young and beautiful maidservant, Jessie Meadows! His lordship has seen this Jessie in Algiers. She is still a fine-looking woman of about forty years of age. She told his lordship the dreadful story of the massacre in the Great Desert; how her master and mistress, with all their attendants, were cut to pieces, and how she herself, Jessie Meadows, was the only one spared, and spared only to be taken captive.

She further informed us that she was purchased by an Algerine merchant and became his wife. She was the mother of many children, and had no desire to return to her native country.

Mother, dear mother, do you see what all this signifies?

That the second marriage of Lord John Daw was as lawful in the sight of man as in the sight of the Lord—as lawful as *he* honestly believed it to be when he contracted it.

He has heard that his second wife (I must write cautiously, you know) had emigrated to the United States, with some relatives, who went first to Washington City and then went to the West.

He thinks by returning to Washington, he may be able to trace these people to their distant home and find his wife.

I long to relieve his anxiety, but must not do so in any direct way.

I must close this letter now, because I must send it by a private hand. A gentleman friend of ours has his yacht in port and sails with the tide at noon. He has kindly consented to take charge of this letter and post it at Marseilles.

The regular mail packet does not leave this port until the first of next week. We shall sail by her for Marseilles, and thence by the first ship for the United States. It may be that we shall follow this letter very soon.

At all events, we expect to be in Washington City early in the new year.

Mother, dear mother, prepare yourself and make up

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your mind what you will do! Yes, prepare yourself for more surprises, and for much that you must forgive. Yet, fear not, for all is well.

All is well. And I am always and forever, your loving and devoted son. RODERICK DUNN.

"At last! at last!" murmured Ruth Dunn to herself as she fondly pressed this letter to her lips and then folded it and placed it in her bosom, next her heart.

Then she offered up her evening prayers, undressed and went to bed—"but not to sleep." Sleep was impossible to one whose heart and brain were so busy with the past and future.

CHAPTER XXXII.

TIME THE REWARDER.

The next few days were very busy ones at the asylum.

The whole establishment had to be renovated and put in festive order for Christmas.

Eldiva could render but little assistance, for she was confined all day to the duties of her school, which would not break up for the holidays until Friday evening before Christmas, which came that year on Sunday.

Only one day, therefore—Saturday—would the teacher have to execute her own commissions by purchasing the Christmas presents for the children and then bringing Nerissa home to the asylum, to be in time to meet Lance on his return.

Yet so diligent was Ruth Dunn from early morning till late at night, and so good use did the teacher make of her very few hours before and after school each day in helping the matron forward with the work, that Friday evening found them with all their preparations completed.

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And on Saturday morning Eldiva walked down to the stand at the northwest corner of the Capitol grounds and took the stage to Georgetown.

She reached the terminus on Bridge Street at about ten o'clock, and left the stage and walked on to the convent on Fayette Street.

She rang the bell at the visitors' door and was soon admitted by the aged portress and conducted by another nun into the neat parlor of the Academy.

Eldiva's face was a familiar one to the sisters. She had been a pupil in their school, some years before. Since that time she had placed her young ward there to be educated, and had visited her very frequently. She scarcely needed to ask for Nerissa. The nun who attended her knew very well whom she had come to see, and said at once:

"Miss Lovel has been looking for you all the morning, madam. She will be down in a few moments."

And, in fact, in less than ten minutes after the nun had left the parlor to call the young lady, Nerissa entered, dressed for her ride and carrying a portly valise in her hand.

She dropped the valise and went into the arms of Eldiva, who had risen to receive her.

"Oh, darling, I knew you would come early, so I got all ready to go with you at once—not to keep you waiting," said Nerissa, after the first warm embrace.

"You are looking well, dear Nea," said the lady, holding off the girl that she might gaze in her lovely face.

"Oh, I am well—very well," replied Nerissa, with a rosy blush at her beauty being praised. "And you, dearest Diva! How are you?" she inquired, looking wistfully into the pale face of her friend.

"I never was better, love."

"And Lance! Dear Lance! Has he arrived?"

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"Do you not suppose, love, that if Lance had arrived he would have come with me to fetch you home?"

"Oh, yes! yes! indeed he would! But he wrote to me that he would be in Washington on Christmas Eve," said Nerissa.

"So he wrote to me also. And he will surely keep his word, if no unforeseen event should happen to delay him," replied the lady.

"Oh, Diva, darling, do you think anything of that sort could have happened?"

"No, sweet—nothing. Christmas Eve has only just begun. Lance will probably come before night."

"Oh, I hope he will! I hope he will!" fervently prayed the girl, clasping her hands closely in the intensity of her emotion.

"He has never yet failed us on Christmas Eve, and he is not likely to do so now. Nerissa, dear, I have had a letter from Uncle Jubal Wells," said Eldiva, by way of changing the conversation.

"Oh, you have!" exclaimed the girl, instantly interested. "And is he and Aunt Joyce coming up to Washington this winter?"

"Oh, of course, they are! Do you think that gay young couple ever mean to miss a fashionable season in Washington?" smiled the lady.

"You needn't smile at the thought of their jollity, Diva! Those two always seem like a pair of children to me. And do you know, Diva, I think that if we all could be 'changed in the twinkling of an eye,' as in the last day, that Uncle Jubal and Aunt Joyce would appear younger than you or I! For, inside of themselves, they *are* younger than we are."

"Very likely they have not done any harm, or had any trouble in their lives," replied Eldiva.

"While you and I, if we have not done much harm,

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have had very much trouble. Is that what you mean, Diva?"

"Yes, Nea; let us not speak of that in these Christmas times. And yet, I must name a man who was the cause of much trouble to you, dearest."

"Mr. Neil Carnes?" suggested Nerissa, in a low voice.

"Yes. Uncle Jubal writes that he—Carnes—has been heard from."

"Oh! I am so sorry, Diva! I never wanted to hear of him again. I have forgiven him—indeed, I *hope* I have forgiven him; but I want to *forget* him, too. He oppresses me! Oh! he stifles me! The very room feels close since you have named him. Are you rested, Diva? If so, let us go. To think how mere names affect us, Diva! The names of Uncle Jubal and Aunt Joyce brought the feeling of springtime flowers, and fresh, balmy air in green country lanes; and the name of Neil Carnes—oh! let us go, dear Diva, if you are rested."

"I am not tired, and we will go at once. You are very fanciful child!" said the lady, as she arose and drew around her the rich India shawl which was the one remnant of her short-lived wealth, which, for its simple comfortableness, she permitted herself to wear now.

The aged portress unlocked the door and passed them out.

When they found themselves in the street, Eldiva called a boy who was lounging at the corner, and hired him to carry Nerissa's valise as far as the stage stand on Bridge Street.

There they took the stage for Washington, and rode as far as Seventh Street and Pennsylvania Avenue, where they got out near Rachendorff's confectionery and toy store.

"We will go in here, where I have to buy the usual Christmas dolls—Lance's donation to the children, you

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know—and where we can leave your valise to be sent home with the merchandise," said Eldiva, as they entered the shop.

One of the shopmen came immediately to wait on them ; for he recognized in Eldiva the young lady who on every Christmas Eve invested about fifteen dollars in cheap dolls.

When the selections were made and paid for, Eldiva placed them beside the heavy valise, which the shopman readily promised to deliver with the dolls.

From Rachendorff's they walked down to Lankpheir's millinery, where the ribbons were purchased, and as they made but a small bundle, brought away.

Finally they turned their steps towards the asylum, where they arrived about two o'clock, and where they found a dainty dinner prepared for them by the orders of Mrs. Dunn.

After dinner they went into the parlor, where Nerissa assisted Eldiva in cutting the ribbon into pieces of two yards each, and labeling each slip with the name of the prospective recipient.

Then Eldiva took out her letters from Lance and from Mr. Jubal Wells, and gave them to Nerissa to read.

When the girl had read them, Eldiva inquired archly :

"What does Lieutenant Roslyn *mean* by saying that when he returns he shall ask your permission to replace upon your finger a ring that you took off and gave him three years ago ?"

"Oh !" replied Nerissa, frankly, yet with a deep blush, "it was my dear mother's wedding ring that I gave him three years ago, when I had nothing else to give for a Christmas gift, and which he said he would keep and guard faithfully until the proper time should come, when he would replace it on my finger—and—and—and—"

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"And—*what*, dear girl?"

"And—marry me, I think he meant," replied Nea, in an almost inaudible whisper.

"Oh!" exclaimed Eldiva, in a pretended illumination.

At that moment Jane Hopkins, the eldest of the orphans, a girl who had been at the institution from its beginning, entered with a heavy valise on her arm, and a huge though light parcel on her shoulder.

She let down both upon the parlor carpet saying:

"A young man left 'em for *you*, Mrs. Daw."

"Very well, Jenny; you may leave them just where they are. I will attend to them," replied the lady.

And Jane Hopkins made the regulation courtesy and left the room.

"Come, Nerissa. Take up your valise, my dear, and we will go up stairs and dress for the evening. Lance may arrive at any moment now," said Eldiva, as she took the bundle of dolls and placed them in the lower compartment of the corner cupboard, and then led the way out of the room.

An hour later both these young persons returned to the parlor in the *demi-toilette* beyond which neither of them ever ventured.

Between the woman of twenty-eight and the girl of eighteen there seemed not so much difference in age as there really was.

Both were two beautiful brunettes—with a difference.

Eldiva's hair and eyes were black as thick night, and her complexion was creamy pale, her form slight, small and plump. She was dressed in a plain black silk, with little lace frills about her throat and wrists, and a little lace cap on her clustering black curls. The long gold watch chain that held her watch, and was doubled twice over her bosom, was the only piece of jewelry she wore.

Nerissa's hair and eyes were dark brown; her com-

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plexion blooming in richness of color on cheeks and lips. She was an inch or two taller than Eldiva, and somewhat thinner. She wore a rich black silk—one of Eldiva's dresses altered to suit the times—and a lace fischu crossed over her bosom and tied behind her back, and her hair half covered with a gold thread net.

"We will begin to label the dolls," said Eldiva; "that work will occupy us until tea time, and help to pass away the interval before the arrival of Lance."

"Oh! I hope nothing has happened to prevent his coming to us!" said Nerissa.

"Nothing has happened, you may be sure, or we should have heard it. 'Ill news travels quickly,' you know," replied Eldiva, cheerfully.

"But he never was so late in coming before," sighed Nerissa.

"Never mind!—An extra number of passengers to land might account for an hour's delay," said Eldiva, as she took the great bundle of dolls from the corner cupboard and brought it and laid it upon the table before the fire.

"You think he will certainly come to-night, Diva?"

"I think he will certainly come!—Now, Nea, dear, there is the book with the school list, and there is pen, ink and paper at your end of the table. Sit down there and copy the list of all except the senior class on that paper, and cut the names in slips and hand them to me. I will pin them on the dolls," said Eldiva, as she sat down and began to untie the bundle.

The two ladies were soon absorbed in their work, so absorbed that they did not hear the door open, or a soft step advance, or suspect the presence of a third party. They both had their heads bent down over their work, when a hand was softly laid on each.

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Both started and looked up in an instant. Both simultaneously cried out:

"LANCE! LANCE!"

It was the young lieutenant who stood laughing between them.

"Lance! Why—who let you in?" demanded Eldiva.

He did not answer until he had kissed *her* hurriedly two or three times, and kissed Nerissa two or three dozen. Then he said:

"Uncle Ambrose. I came around the back way and Uncle Ambrose let me up the back stairs, so I could creep in upon you unawares!—Well! here I am, just in time to label these dolls, as I have done for the last three years. Come, Nea!

> 'A substitute shines brightly as a king,
> When not the king is there,'

and no doubt you have done well in my place. But I am here now, and must request you to abdicate," said Lance, good humoredly, as he drew an arm-chair to the fire and bowed to Nea, as a sign that she must take it.

Nerissa laughed, and left her seat at the table and sank into the comfortable rocker that had been brought for her by Lance.

Lance himself took her vacated place and assumed her office.

Eldiva asked many questions as to his promotion, his furlough, and his future prospects, and Lance answered them as satisfactorily as he was able to do, telling her, however, little more than he had told her in his letter—namely, that he had been promoted to his lieutenancy and had his three months' furlough.

"I shall be ordered *somewhere* about the last of March, but I have not the least idea whether it will be to the Mediterranean Sea or to the Pacific or Indian Ocean.

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But to some foreign service, certainly. So that my professional prospects are somewhat vague. My private lookout is, I hope, more certain," concluded the young man, with a joyous glance towards Nerissa.

While they talked, Jane Hopkins came in with her prim, little courtesy, and Mrs. Dunn's compliments, to know when they would be ready for tea.

"Ask Mrs. Dunn please to keep it back for fifteen minutes until we finish this work, Jenny," said Eldiva.

And the girl disappeared, and the work went on to its completion.

Then Eldiva went out to notify the matron that she might ring the tea-bell.

As soon as she had left the room, Lance drew his chair to the side of Nerissa's, took the girl's hand, and whispered :

"Nea, nearest and dearest, when shall I place this ring upon your finger?"

"Whenever you and Eldiva and Uncle and Aunt Wells think it best that you should, Lance," she answered, frankly.

"Oh, dear! Are so many people to have a voice in our destiny, dear Nea? Say, cannot you and I decide for ourselves? Or, at least, taking Eldiva into our confidence, can we not leave out our old aunt and uncle?" inquired the young man.

"No, for Uncle Jubal and Aunt Joyce are coming to the city directly after New Year, and they must be consulted, Lance. I do not think, however, that they will object to anything that you and Diva decide upon," said the girl.

"And if I and Diva decide upon a speedy union of Lance and Nea—what then? Will you consent?" inquired the young man, drawing the girl closer to his side.

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"Yes, Lance, yes."

He sealed the contract with a kiss, and then said:

"If I should be ordered to the Mediterranean, dear Nea, would you have the courage to go out alone in a merchant ship to rejoin me at some port where I might be stationed for a time?"

"Oh, yes, indeed, Lance. But why can I not go in your ship with you?"

"Because it would be against the rules, my dear."

"Mrs. Fitzgerald went a voyage with Captain Fitzgerald, and Mrs. Gamble with Captain Gamble from our own neighborhood."

"Yes, love, the captains have occasionally taken out their wives with them, but no lower officer, as far as I know. And it is now rumored that, upon account of the dissatisfaction this has caused, even the captains will no longer be privileged in this respect. No, Nea, love, you will have to remain here until my return from my next cruise, or else go out in a merchant ship to some foreign port to rejoin me. It is for you to choose which you will do."

"Then I choose to go out to you, Lance," said the girl.

The ringing of a bell stopped their conversation.

"Come, Lance," said Nea, rising, "we will go in to tea."

They went into the dining-room, where a dainty supper was spread, and where Mrs. Dunn welcomed the young lieutenant as an old friend.

Jane Hopkins waited on the table.

After tea the three friends returned to the parlor and resumed their seats and their chat.

"As to-morrow is Sunday as well as Christmas, the presents cannot be distributed until Monday morning."

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"No, I suppose not. Well, I shall be on hand then to assist," replied Lance.

"Did I tell you that Uncle and Aunt Wells are coming to the city after New Year?" inquired Eldiva.

"Nea told me; but I should have known the fact of myself. They *always* come at this season, do they not?" inquired Lance.

"Yes, of course. But did Nea tell you that Uncle Jubal had received some very important news from London, concerning Neil Carnes?" demanded Eldiva.

"No, she did not!" said Lance, in surprise.

"I never like to talk of that man, you know, Eldiva," explained Nerissa.

"What news is this of which you speak, Elvida?" questioned Lance.

"He did not specify in his letter to me. He wrote with some mystery, telling me that he could only discuss the subject in a personal interview," answered the lady.

"If Uncle Jubal said the news was important it must be *very* important! He never exaggerates. He rather understates than otherwise. I wonder what his news can be. Have you any idea, Diva?"

"Not the slightest," answered the lady.

"Well, we shall know when he comes!" exclaimed the young lieutenant, as he arose to bid his cousin and his betrothed good-night.

And he left them with the promise to return early in the morning to go with them to church.

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CHAPTER XXXIII.

WAITING FOR THE END.

The Christmas Sabbath dawned brilliantly. A light snow had fallen during the night, but the sky had cleared towards morning and the rising sun shone over the whitened ground and powdered roofs and trees in wintry splendor and beauty.

Lance arrived at the asylum soon after breakfast in good time to escort Nerissa to church.

Mrs. Dunn and Eldiva went with the children of the institution—the teacher at the head and the matron at the foot of the procession.

After church the children dined in their long dining-room on the good things provided for them, and which the matron, the teacher, and their two young guests helped to serve.

Two hours later, Mrs. Dunn, Eldiva, Nerissa and Lance ate their Christmas dinner together in the parlor.

The afternoon and evening were spent very quietly, all merry-making being deferred until the next day.

At an early hour Lance bade his friends good-night, with the promise to return early in the morning to assist in the distribution of Christmas presents to the orphans as he had done for the last three years.

As soon as Lance had gone, Nerissa complained of fatigue, and said that she would like to go to bed.

"For you know, Diva, that I have been accustomed to such *very* early hours at the convent," pleaded the girl.

"Very well my love. Kiss me good-night and go. I have to see Mrs. Dunn for a few minutes, and then I will join you," said Eldiva.

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And Nerissa kissed her cousin good-night, although they shared the same room and bed.

"I shall be asleep before you come up, Diva," said Nerissa, drowsily.

"So be it, love. I shall not wake you," replied Eldiva.

And when Nea had crept sleepily up stairs, Diva went in search of Ruth Dunn. She merely wished to ask the matron to allow the children to rise and leave their dormitory an hour earlier than usual the next morning, because the little creatures were so eager to receive their presents that Lance had promised to come and distribute to them before breakfast.

Eldiva went through all the lower rooms of the house without finding the matron, and then she went up stairs, and seeing the gleam of a light under the door of Mrs. Dunn's room, which was directly opposite her own, she went there and rapped.

"Come in!" said the deep, rich voice of the matron—that voice for whose rare music "the crazy lord" had bent his ears to listen years before.

Eldiva entered and closed the door behind her.

The matron's room was very plain, with white-washed walls, white window curtains, white bed, stained pine bureau and washstand, a cane rocking chair, and one other chair, and a stained pine table drawn up before the little wood fire.

Ruth Dunn was seated at this table with an open japan box before her.

"I disturb you; you are busy," said Eldiva, deprecatingly.

"Oh, no, not at all. Take that rocking-chair and draw up to the fire. Put your feet on the fender. It is a cold night," said Ruth, pleasantly.

Eldiva sat down and made her little petition.

Ruth granted it at once.

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The teacher arose to leave the room.

"Don't go," said the matron.

"But I interrupt you," replied Eldiva.

"Oh, not at all. I have spent this evening in a luxury that I have not often permitted myself—that is, reading over all my Roderick's letters. A sort of communing with him this Christmas evening, you know. By the way, did I tell you that he was on his way home?" inquired Ruth.

"No!" exclaimed Eldiva, in a tone of pleased surprise.

"Ah, no; I remember now how it was that I did not. You rather discouraged me, my dear, when I would have been communicative."

"In regard to Mr. Dunn's employers, not in regard to himself. I shall be very glad to hear any good news of your son, any good news that would affect your happiness, Ruth."

"Thank you, my dear. I thought you would sympathize with me, so far as to be happy to hear my son is coming home. Ah, my dear! If I could have *dreamed* how long his absence would be, I think the first parting must have killed me; but time and habit inure us to these things. You never met my son, I think you told me?"

"No," said Eldiva, gently.

"Now, do you know that I think it is very strange you did not. He was his lordship's private secretary and lived at The Hill all the time—I beg your pardon— I am again on forbidden ground," suddenly exclaimed Ruth Dunn, with an expression of so much regret that Eldiva, to reassure her, in a quiet way, answered simply:

"I knew that his lordship had a private secretary, but I was under the impression that he was the hunchback scholar whom I occasionally passed on the stairs, who was certainly also in his lordship's employment in some such

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capacity—perhaps as librarian; I do not know. I only know that I never met Mr. Dunn. But, Ruth dear, I should be *very glad* to meet your son when he comes," said the lady, turning a countenance beaming with affection upon the fond mother.

"Thank you, love. I can well believe it, for you are so full of sympathy," replied Mrs. Dunn.

"When does he come?" inquired Eldiva.

"Early in the new year he hopes to be in Washington."

"With *his party?*" inquired Eldiva.

"Yes, with his employers," replied Ruth, who was again removing every letter and parcel from the japan box, as if in search of something hard to find.

Eldiva fell into a grave and thoughtful silence.

"I had a pencil sketch of Roderick, drawn by his class-mate at college, Charley King, you know, who has now a studio on Twelfth Street, and is getting quite famous as a portrait painter. The sketch is a perfect likeness of Roderick as he appeared on his twenty-first birthday. He gave it to me when he was going away, and I am sure I put it into this box," explained Ruth, as she continued her search.

"People often hide things so carefully that they cannot find them," observed Eldiva, with a smile.

"So they do," assented Ruth. "Ah! here it is now just where I might have expected to come upon it—in the lowest compartment of the box, at the very bottom of everything else," she laughed, as she drew a small, flat parcel, in silver tissue paper, from its secret receptacle.

"I am glad you have found it," said Eldiva, bending towards her with amiable intent.

Ruth opened the parcel, which contained not only the pencil sketch of Roderick Dunn, but—something else,

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at sight of which Ruth Dunn looked surprised and annoyed.

Recovering herself after a moment's hesitation, she drew out the sketch, pressed it fondly to her lips, and then passed it on to Eldiva, saying, proudly :

"There is my Roderick ! Tell me what you think of him."

Eldiva took the picture with a smile, and looked at it ; but the smile vanished as she started, and gazed until every vestige of color had fled from her face, leaving even her lips pale as death.

Ruth, watching for some expression of admiration, saw the start, the sudden change, the deadly pallor, and drew her own conclusions.

"Ah ! poor darling !" she said to herself ; "she sees the likeness, and it has upset her. I should have thought of that ! But never mind ; I have something else here that may divert her thoughts from that unlucky likeness," said the kindly woman to herself, as she affected to take no notice of her companion's disturbance, but turned the little parcel of silver tissue and drew from it a small, gossamer lace pocket-handkerchief, neatly folded, but very yellow from long keeping.

By this time Eldiva had recovered her composure, but not her color.

"This, then, is your son, Mr. Roderick Dunn ?" she said, in a very low voice that it required an effort to make steady.

"Yes, that is Roderick," replied the mother, in a deprecating manner, as if mutely making the apology she dared not speak.

"He is very handsome," said Eldiva, in the same low, constrained tone.

"I think so ; but I am his mother, and I may be too

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much prejudiced in his favor to be a fair judge," smiled the matron.

"No, you are not. He *is* very handsome," repeated Eldiva. And then she startled Ruth Dunn by demanding, abruptly: "Did you ever see Mr. Daw—the son of Lord John?"

"Yes, my dear, I have," replied the elder woman, staring at the speaker.

"Did you ever notice a likeness between him and your son?"

"Yes, my dear. And now let me beg your pardon for forgetting that likeness when I showed you that sketch. If I had remembered it—as I should have done—I would not have called your attention to that. You will forgive my thoughtlessness?" said Ruth, gravely.

"There is nothing whatever to forgive, dear friend. I am glad to have seen this picture, for many reasons. But, tell me, is the likeness as strong as this picture would indicate? for this might have been taken for—the other one," said Eldiva.

"Yes, my dear, quite as strong; the two are counterparts of each other," replied Ruth.

"And does this remarkable likeness extend to voice, glance, gesture—all that makes individuality?"

"All—everything! You would never be able to tell one from the other except by some prearranged difference in dress."

"Then they would seen to be of near kin to each other. *Are they so?*" demanded the younger lady, looking full into the face of the elder.

Ruth Dunn was taken by surprise, and thrown into a momentary confusion. She did not wish to divulge family secrets at this point of time, even to her beloved young friend. She recovered herself, however, and answered evasively;

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"Akin? Why, I do not believe that they ever met, or ever so much as heard of each other's existence until Roderick became Lord John's secretary."

"Ah! then it may be one of those strange accidents of resemblance that we sometimes hear and read of between persons who are nothing at all to each other," said Eldiva, seeing that Ruth Dunn was either ignorant of any tie between the counterparts, or desirous of concealing it, if any such existed.

And she returned the sketch to Ruth, saying again:

"He is very handsome."

"And now, my dear," said the widow, as she received the little picture, and replaced it in the japan box, "I have a confession to make to you."

Eldiva looked up uneasily. What was she about to hear? Anything to the discredit of this woman, whom she had learned to love as a mother? She hoped not.

"What would you think, my dear, if I should tell you that I have something of yours in my possession that I have kept from you for years? Something of yours that was given me to be returned to you years ago, before you ever came to this house—before we ever knew each other? Say, what would you think, Eldiva?"

The young lady reflected for a few moments and then replied:

"I should think that you had put it away with the intention of returning it to me at the first convenient season, and had then forgotten all about it."

"Bless your confiding heart, my child, that is just what happened! *This* was found by my son Roderick, who intrusted it to me to be returned to its owner," said Ruth Dunn, handing the gossamer cobweb to Eldiva, who took it with a smile, looked at it carelessly, and then—let it fall from her fingers as the pallor of horror crept over

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her face on recognizing the lace handkerchief she had lost on that fatal wedding night.

"Oh, Heaven of heavens!—where — where —" she gasped, through pallid lips.

"Where did Roderick find it, do you mean? Why, on the front stairs of the Wolf's Head Tavern, my dear! I hope I have done no new harm, now!" exclaimed Ruth Dunn, in terror and amazement at the effect of her action.

"Oh, my heart! my heart! Was *he*—Roderick Dunn—your son—there—at the Wolf's Head—that night?" breathed Eldiva, on the very verge of swooning.

"What night, dear girl? The night after your marriage, do you mean?" questioned the alarmed and distressed woman.

"Yes, yes!" sighed Eldiva, as if her soul left her body in that sigh.

"He was there, my dear child, and he found your handkerchief on the stairs and he tried to follow and give it to you, but failed to find you, I suppose, for, at any rate, he brought it home with him and left it with me to be returned to you. Oh, Eldiva, my dear, have I hurt you again? Ah, how unlucky I am! I am very sorry, my child. I never meant to hurt you!" pleaded Ruth Dunn,

"I know it! Oh, I know it! You are kindness itself! But do not speak to me just now. Do not mind me—I —think I will go to bed. There!—don't distress your tender heart about me. Good-night, dear friend," said Eldiva, putting her arms around Ruth's neck and kissing her fondly before she left the room.

When Eldiva had closed the door behind her, Ruth Dunn dropped her head upon her hands and fell into thought. Certain terrible suspicions that had troubled her mind years ago, but that had been lulled to sleep,

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were re-awakened by her reflections on the scene which had just passed.

Why had Eldiva been so greatly agitated at sight of Roderick Dunn's picture? Why had her agitation been increased almost to hysteria or syncope at sight of that little lace trifle? What mystery was this?

Ruth Dunn could form no theory.

She locked her Japan box and pushed it to its place on that table of which it was the chief ornament, and then, as the clock had struck eleven, she retired to bed, where she could not sleep for speculating on the enigma that occupied her mind.

In the meantime, Eldiva reached her own chamber, which was now chilly, because the open wood-fire had nearly gone out. She did not replenish it from the basket of wood in the chimney corner, but dropped down in the rocking-chair, covered her face with her hands, and broke into a storm of tears and sobs, and wept long and violently.

Not until the paroxysm had exhausted itself and left her in a calmer, though a weaker, state, could she reflect clearly on all that she had learned that night—on all that had passed, and all that was to come.

That Roderick Dunn, the son of Ruth, was the man who bore that fatal likeness to her late husband, Mr. John Daw—was the man who found that little lace toy on the stairs of the Wolf's Head Tavern on her wedding night and went to put it in her hands—was the man who —oh, woe! woe! If Roderick Dunn being the unknown man, were coming back to Washington, she, Eldiva, must leave the city and bury herself in the wilds of St. Mary's, or, anywhere—anywhere out of his sight and hearing!

She did not go to bed, but spent the night alternately pacing up and down the floor or crouching in her rock-

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ing-chair, tortured equally by memory and by anticipation.

Towards morning fatigue overcame her as she walked, so, throwing a large shawl around her shoulders, she dropped once more into her chair, not to sleep, but simply to rest, and then sleep came to her unbidden and "sealed down her eyelids" in forgetfulness of all her cares.

So she slept soundly for several hours.

The merry voices and pattering footsteps of the children in their dormitories overhead were the first sounds that awakened her in the morning.

She opened her eyes and looked around. The sun was glancing brightly through the slats of her east window shutter. All was cheerful in the morning. Why, then, this weight upon her heart? What had happened? she asked herself. Then came recollection with a rush.

RODERICK DUNN!

That name now stood for all the nameless woe and horror and desperation of her past life! for all the grief, terror and desolation of her future years.

"*Diva, dear!*"

The voice stole like a strain of sweet music into the whirlwind of her thoughts; fell like oil on the tossing waves of her emotions.

She looked around and saw Nerissa sitting up in bed.

"Diva, dear, why—you have been sitting up all night!" said the girl.

"Yes, darling," admitted the lady.

"But why?"

"I fell asleep in the chair, Nea, and slept until I was awakened by the children overhead," explained Eldiva, telling only part of the truth.

"I never heard of such a thing!" declared Nea, as she slipped out of bed and went straight to the fireplace to

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rake the dying embers together and heap them with waste paper and split wood from the basket, like a practical little creature as she was.

"The children have risen earlier than usual, for the distribution of presents is to be made before breakfast this morning, so we must hurry, Nerissa," said Eldiva, forcing herself to speak cheerfully.

"Oh, I have learned to dress quickly at the academy. It would take *years* of fashionable life—if I ever should get into fashionable life, which is highly improbable—to unlearn that lesson," laughed Nea.

And in fact she was washed and dressed for the day in about fifteen minutes.

They heard the children coming down stairs hilariously, not to say uproariously.

As soon as they had all passed by and descended to the ground floor, Eldiva and Nerissa, who were quite ready, followed them down.

They found the children already in their seats in the school-room.

They all arose to receive their teacher, and stood up until she had taken her place at her desk on the platform.

Beside her sat Nerissa Lovel, and before them were piled up the Christmas presents.

Mrs. Dunn sat, for the time being, near the teacher, who now signed for the children to resume their seats, while she opened the Bible to begin the morning services by reading the lesson for the day. The chapter in the New Testament was followed by prayers, and the services were concluded with a hymn.

The last notes were still vibrating on the air when Lancelot Roslyn entered the school-room and quietly dropped into a seat near the door.

After the doxology he passed up the middle aisle between the seats, smiling a mute good-morning to the

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children on his right and left as he passed until he reached the platform, where he shook hands cordially with the matron, the teacher and the young lady guest.

Then he took his seat beside Eldiva, and the distributing of the presents commenced, and progressed very much in the same manner in which it had been conducted three years before and every year since.

Some changes had taken place in the meantime. A few of the elder girls had grown up and had been placed out at trades. The little ones had grown bigger and now preferred ribbons, and other little ones had been admitted to the asylum, who could be made happy only by dolls.

When the distribution was completed, and the children dismissed to their breakfast, Lance told Eldiva that he had engaged a comfortable sleigh to be at the door by ten o'clock, and would be very happy if she, Nerissa, and Mrs. Dunn would go with him for a long sleigh ride.

Eldiva and Nerissa accepted the invitation ; but Mrs. Dunn declined it, pleading her duties at the asylum as her excuse.

After the children of the institute had finished their breakfast, Lance joined the ladies at their morning meal in their own parlor.

At ten o'clock the sleigh was at the door, and Lance, Eldiva and Nerissa started for their long drive.

They crossed the Anacostia River, by the Navy Yard Bridge, and drove out on the Port Tobacco Road as far as the old Teebee Tavern in the Forest of Prince George's.

Here, for a change, they stopped and dined, returning homeward in the afternoon, and reaching the asylum at nightfall.

The merry children, tired of play, were now in bed.

Lance took tea with his friends and then returned to his hotel.

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CHAPTER XXXIV.

REVELATIONS.

As New Year's Day would come on Sunday and be celebrated on Monday, the Board of Managers of the Orphan Asylum had given directions that the Christmas holidays should last until the Tuesday after New Year, when the school should be re-opened.

In the meantime the teacher and pupils had plenty of leisure, which the latter enjoyed, but not the former.

Eldiva's health and spirits seemed suddenly to have given way. She was pale and silent. Mrs. Dunn complained that the teacher ate next to nothing at meal times. 'Nerissa, had she been less sound a sleeper, might have told of the wakeful and restless nights of her bedfellow. Lance noticed the change in his cousin, and took an early opportunity of questioning his betrothed. One morning when he had called early and was received alone in the parlor by the young lady, after the usual affectionate greetings and some little strictly personal conversation, Lance suddenly inquired :

"Nea, dearest, what is the matter with Eldiva? I never saw any one so changed in all my life!"

"I don't know, Lance ; but I *suspect* it is because Lord John and Mr. Daw are coming home. You know how strange their mutual relations are," whispered Nea.

"'Strange' indeed! I should think so! Married for love nine years ago against the opposition of all their friends—for you know his lordship was bitterly opposed to the match for worldly reasons, and her relatives equally unwilling for it, on moral principles, and yet those lovers bore down all opposition before them, actually *conquered* the consent of their reluctant relatives,

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married with *eclat*, started on their wedding journey, got as far as the Wolf's Head, and that night were hurled asunder by some unexplained cause, the bridegroom rushing off in one direction and the bride in another, to the consternation of their friends and the scandal of the community."

"But they were afterwards reconciled," said Nea, deprecatingly.

"Yes, and then more mystery, or insanity! They were reconciled on his death-bed, or his supposed death-bed; and afterwards, when his supposed death was proved to be only apparent death, and he was resuscitated and restored to life and health, hey! presto! change! and, 'as before!' bride and groom utterly estranged."

"Yes, and now you can understand how his return to the city should disturb her, sighed Nea.

"I can't understand anything about it, my darling! Loves her to madness till he marries her; casts her off on her bridal day or night; forgives her, dying; repudiates her, living; no, I cannot understand it."

"There is another mystery! You know she always used to go on Christmas Eve, or Christmas morning, to put wreaths of immortelles on the old keeper's grave in the Congress Burying Ground," said Nea.

"Yes, I know."

"Well, she went this year on Christmas Eve, and not only on that day but on every day since has she visited the place."

"That *is* strange! What interest can that grave have for her?"

"I have not the slightest idea," replied Nea.

"Have you ever questioned her?"

"Yes; but she gave me no satisfaction. She only gently requested me not to repeat my questions."

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"Have you inquired what troubles her now?"

"Yes, and she was too truthful to answer 'Nothing' as many might have done; because there certainly was *something;* but she looked at me gravely and sweetly and said:

"'Do not distress yourself about me, dear little Nea; and do not notice my moods in *any* manner.'

"Then, Lance, I knew I must be silent on that subject to *her;* and whatever I feel or think, I must not express either thoughts or feelings on this matter to her."

"I wonder if she would go with us this evening to the theatre to see the new star, Clara Fisher, who is to play '*Beatrice*' in 'Much Ado About Nothing.'"

"Of course, she will go with us anywhere, for she does not nurse her trouble, but tries to throw it off," Nea explained.

Then the thoughts of the young lovers wandered away from Eldiva and her mysteries; and they began to talk of their future.

"I *think* I shall be ordered to the Mediterranean, Nerissa. I am working for that service rather than for a cruise in the Pacific; and Commodore Yorke is helping me all he can with the Secretary. And, Nea, dearest, I want to call you my own, my wife, before I sail, so that you may follow me in a packet ship and rejoin me in whatever port we may be bound to. You consent to this, Nea, dearest?" he whispered, with his arm about the girl's round, slender waist.

"Wait until Aunt and Uncle Wells come, Lance, dear. They will be here soon," she shyly answered.

While they were talking Eldiva opened the door and glided in.

Lance met her with cordial affection.

The invitation to the theatre was given and accepted.

And when evening came the party of three went to

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see the new star. But though Lance and Nerissa enjoyed the comedy with all the zest of youth and good spirits, Eldiva was grave and preoccupied. She was anxious to resign her situation at the asylum and to escape into the country before Lord John Daw and his party should reach the city. But, unfortunately for her, she could not send in her resignation before there should be a meeting of the Board of Managers, half of whom were at this season absent on visits to the old country homesteads, where Christmas was being celebrated after the fashion of the "good old times;" so there would be no meeting of the board for a month to come. Nor could she run away from her post of duty like a recreant merely because to go would be more convenient and agreeable to her than to stay. She must remain until she could honorably retire.

But what in the meantime should she do if Roderick Dunn should reach Washington and come to visit his mother at the asylum before she should be free to leave? Certainly, if he should only come to call she could keep her own room during his stay. But if he should come frequently to dinner or to tea, how should she manage always to avoid him, or how explain such avoidance to his mother without taking that mother into her own confidence and telling her what great reason she had for shunning her son—a communication that Eldiva could never have brought herself to make—that she would have died rather than have made?

What, then, should be her course?

This was the problem that occupied her thoughts as she was seated in her place, apparently watching the sparkling play of grace, wit and humor on the stage, which continually excited the applause and laughter of her two companions, and indeed of the whole audience.

She tried to rouse herself from her reverie, to break

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away from her troublesome problem, to join the merriment around her, but in vain; the attraction of her dark enigma was too strong.

When the curtain fell upon the final scene of the comedy, and the young actress, amid deafening applause, was called before the audience and greeted by a shower of bouquets, nothing could exceed the sympathetic delight of Nerissa and Lance, who continued to gaze with admiration upon the beautiful vision until she courtesied and finally withdrew.

Then, after a final round of applause, the audience began to disperse.

Lance picked up Eldiva's India shawl and wrapped it around her closely, for, seeing how deadly pale she was, he thought that she was cold.

Nea, in her Chinchilla hat, and boa, and muff, looked rosy and warm enough.

They left the theatre and walked briskly back to the asylum, where thoughtful Ruth Dunn had a glowing fire and a hot pot of chocolate waiting for them; not to have saved them all from pleurisy or rheumatism would Ruth have provided a pitcher of hot punch or mulled wine; but the chocolate served a much better purpose.

The young party were just cold and tired enough to enjoy their seats around the blazing fire and the warm, aromatic beverage with which their cups were soon filled.

"There has been a message for you, my dears," said the matron, addressing the two young ladies, as she handed them the steaming cups.

"Ah! from whom?" eagerly demanded Nea, while Eldiva's heart seemed to stop in its beatings—for every new event frightened her now.

"From your Uncle and Aunt Wells, my dears. You were expecting them, I think."

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"Oh, yes! Have they arrived!" eagerly demanded Eldiva, quickly recovering herself when she heard the nature of the message.

"Yes, dear, they reached the city this evening and put up at the Indian Queen Tavern, and immediately sent their man-servant Gad with a verbal message announcing their safe arrival and their wish to see you both at the tavern as early as you can make it convenient tomorrow morning."

"Oh, we will go immediately after breakfast!" said Nerissa, impetuously.

"I will call here early to escort you, then," added Lance, as he arose and bade them all good night.

Half an hour later every one was in bed, and all was quiet about the asylum, except the troubled heart and sleepless mind of Eldiva.

Directly after breakfast the next morning Lance came to the house to escort Eldiva and Nerissa to call on Mr. and Mrs. Wells at the Indian Queen Hotel.

They found the gay and festive old couple in their private parlor that overlooked the avenue.

They were both looking finely, with their portly forms, fresh complexions and silvery white hair, which the old gentleman still wore parted in the middle and flowing down each side his clean-shaven, florid face, and which the old lady wore dressed high above her forehead and surmounted by a pretty, bright cap.

Their costumes were as gay as themselves. Uncle Jubal wore a bright blue cloth cut-away coat, with bright brass buttons, a yellow brocade vest, yellow doeskin short breeches, yellow silk stockings, and low shoes with great brass buckles.

Aunt Joyce wore a much beruffled and beflowered chintz dressing gown, of as many hues as Joseph's coat of many colors, over a white dimity skirt, and embroid-

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ered flesh-colored silk hose, and high-heeled slippers with silver buckles.

They were seated at a table before the fire, both engaged in looking over the morning papers.

As the visitors were shown into the room, Uncle Jubal, with the agility of eighteen instead of the infirmity of eighty-one, sprang up to meet them with both hands held out. As the kindly old gentleman had not "taken pen in hand to avail himself of the opportunity"—of being formal and tedious, he could afford to be natural and delightful as he was.

"How do you do, my dear girls?" he cordially exclaimed, with a hearty grasp of the hand for each, and then as hearty a kiss. "And you, Lance! dear boy! what a fine fellow you have grown!—six feet tall, if an inch, and broad-shouldered in proportion! Go speak to your aunt, young people! You must not expect *her* to leave her chair for *you*, you know!" he exclaimed, as he continued to shake hands all around once more.

"We are so glad to see you, dear Uncle Jubal!" said Nerissa.

"So happy to find you so well, uncle!" added Eldiva.

"Never saw you look so splendidly in all my life before, sir!" put in Lance.

"Thank you, young ones! Yes, I feel pretty well and jolly!" exclaimed the old gentleman, gayly accepting the compliments. "And so does your aunt. There! go pay your respects to her! I must not keep you from her!" he added to Lance, for the two girls had already flown to Aunt Joyce and were covering her with caresses.

"And you will stay and spend the day and dine with us," said the genial old lady, when all these greetings had been got through with and they were all seated near the table and the fire.

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"But you were going out perhaps?" suggested Eldiva.

"Oh, no, not to-day. We shall stay in the house to-day," replied Aunt Joyce.

"Oh, yes! I forgot! You must be tired after your long journey," said Eldiva.

"'Tired?'" echoed Aunt Joyce, her very tone promptly repudiating the degrading imputation—"'*tired?*' Now, my dear, when did you ever hear *me* complain of being tired? I am not the least bit tired? We came up from St. Inigoes yesterday in the large sleigh, drawn by four strong draught horses; and I tell you, my loves, we just flew over the highways! And we both feel as fresh this morning as we did yesterday morning before we started!"

"More so, Joyce, my dear! much more so! The change has already done us so much good!" chimed in Uncle Jubal. Then turning to Eldiva and Nerissa, he explained—"The reason why we don't care to go out to-day is because there is really nothing to see. Congress—both Houses of Congress—and also the Supreme Court, have all adjourned until after the holidays are over, so it is of no use to go to the Capitol—nothing to see there! And the President don't receive before New Year's Day, so there is no use to go there! And it's no use to go anywhere! That is one reason why we stay home to-day! And another reason is that we want to have a good, long visit with you young folks, whom we have not had the pleasure of seeing for a year," concluded Uncle Jubal.

"And now you will stop and spend the whole day with us, and maybe to-night your Uncle Jubal will take us all to the Washington Theatre to see this new actress, Miss Clara Fisher! There, now, go into my bedroom and take off your bonnets and furs, you two girls! And,

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Lance, boy, you give your hat and cloak to Gad there. He will take them away and hang them up." said the old lady, settling the whole question by taking it for granted that her young relatives would stay to dinner and spend the day, as, indeed, they concluded to do without further parley.

"I saw in the *Intelligencer* of this morning that Lord John Daw and his party are expected to be in Washington from their foreign tour early in the new year," said Mr. Wells, taking up the journal alluded to after the young ladies had returned to the parlor, and all the little company were re-assembled at the fireside.

"However could that have got into the paper?" inquired Lance, raising his eyebrows.

"From Daly, his lordship's agent, I presume. At least, the paragraph says that Mr. Richard Daly, his lordship's land steward, has received a letter from his lordship instructing him to put the mansion house at The Hill in perfect readiness for the reception of his lordship and party," said Mr. Wells.

"Ah, yes! The news came from Daly, then, of course." said Lance,

"Had *you* heard of it before? I thought from your manner of speaking that you *had*, perhaps?" inquired Mr. Wells.

"Well, yes," laughed Lance.

"And, pray, how did *you* get the news of it, if one may ask?" questioned Uncle Jubal.

"Why, a friend of mine—Mrs. Dunn, the matron of the Girls' Orphan Asylum—received a letter from her son Roderick, who is my lord's secretary, and this letter announced their return in January."

"Then there is no doubt of the fact, of course," concluded Uncle Jubal. And suddenly recollecting that this subject could not be an agreeable one to his niece,

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Eldiva, considering the terms she was on with the house of Daw, he changed it abruptly by saying:

"And now, young people, tell me something about yourselves. Lance, what are your prospects, my dear boy? On leave, are you?"

"Yes, Uncle."

"For how long?"

"Three months—till the 20th of March."

"Humph! And then, Lance, where do you go? Not on home service again, of course?"

"No, sir; I expect to be ordered to the Mediterranean," said the young lieutenant.

"Ah! Then you are fortunate. If you must be ordered somewhere, the Mediterranean is the most desirable place. When do you expect to sail?"

"About the first of April."

"Ah! And when do you expect to be promoted?"

"I have just been promoted, sir."

"Ah! indeed! I congratulate you, Lieutenant Roslyn! And now when do you expect to be married, eh?"

This question was put jocosely, without any thought of a serious reply to it, so the old gentleman was rather taken aback when the young lieutenant gravely replied:

"Very soon, my dear uncle, if you please."

"Eh, what! You *don't* mean it, Lance?"

"Yes, sir, with all my heart I mean it!"

"Dear me! Bless my soul! And who is the fair lady, if your old uncle may inquire?"

Lance arose and took the hand of Nerissa and led her, blushing like a rose, before the old gentleman.

"Nerissa has blessed me so, dear uncle."

"Eh! what! what! Nea! Bless my soul! Bless my soul!" said the old gentleman.

"I always *knew* that would be a match!" laughed the old lady.

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"Bless—my—soul!" repeated Uncle Jubal, in a tone that caused Nerissa to change color and Lance to say, in an aggrieved tone:

"I hope you see no objection, Uncle Wells?"

"I? Lor', no! That is—if it's a love match," said Uncle Jubal, looking with pretended shrewdness at the young man, who blushed, but did not speak.

"*Is* it a love match—a *true* love match, now?" demanded Uncle Jubal.

"Sir, Nerissa is my nearest and dearest. I love her better than all the world! I do not know the time when I did not love her better than myself," earnestly replied the young man.

"Well, I am glad you told me, anyhow," chuckled Mr. Wells.

"Did you really need to be told, sir?" inquired Lance, in an aggrieved tone.

"Well—yes—it is a satisfaction to know that this is a real, good, old-fashioned love match, else I might have suspected it, with very good grounds, to be a mercenary one," still chuckled the old man.

"MERCENARY?" indignantly exclaimed Lance.

"Mercenary?" doubtfully questioned Eldiva.

"Yes; a suspicious person might have thought so," persisted Mr. Wells.

"But, why, in the name of Heaven?" demanded Lance.

"Why, just because the young lady whose hand you have won is now the richest heiress in this city.

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CHAPTER XXXV.

A HAPPY DAY.

"Nerissa Lovel is the richest heiress in the city," repeated Mr. Jubal Wells.

Eldiva smiled, Nerissa laughed, Lance roared.

They did this all in compliment to Mr. Wells, for they thought the "news" was one of his jokes—not a very brilliant one, to be sure, but, all the same, they were in duty bound to laugh at Uncle Jubal's jokes.

"You'll not break with me now that you are a wealthy young lady, will you, Nea?" jocosely inquired Lance.

"Oh, Lancelot!" pleaded Nerissa.

"I shall come to you for a generous donation to the Orphan Asylum, Nea," said Eldiva.

"Oh, Diva!" pleaded Nerissa.

"Miss Lovel will not commit herself by any promises," remarked Lance with pretended gravity.

"I see that she will not," assented Eldiva, with affected displeasure.

"Oh, Lancelot! Oh, Diva! It is cruel of you to tease me so when you *know* that Uncle Jubal is making fun of me!" said Nerissa, almost ready to weep. "I wish I *was* rich! *Oh*, how I *do* wish I was rich! Then I would give everything they want to every one I love, and ever so much to the Orphan Asylum! But you know that I am as poor as—as—'as a church mouse,'" concluded Nerissa, falling back upon the household proverb.

"Poor!" exclaimed Mr. Jubal Wells, staring at the girl over the tops of his gold-rimmed spectacles.

"Yes, Uncle Jubal. Didn't you know it? Why, it took all the little personal property that my dear mother

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left behind her to pay the debts, and I was left without a penny. Didn't you know that? Lance and Diva know it, for they have taken care of me and paid my school bills. I thought you knew that," added the grieved girl.

"Don't tease her any more, Uncle Jubal. She is a sensitive little being, and cannot stand, nor *under*stand, our rude jokes," said the lieutenant, with some asperity. Then turning to the young girl, he took her hand and whispered:

"Nea, love, I beg your pardon for my share in this foolish jesting."

"'JESTING!'" echoed Uncle Jubal, who had overheard the whispered words. "*Who* is jesting? *I* am not, so help me Heaven! I never was in more solemn and joyous earnest in all the days of my life!"

Impressed by the gravity of the old gentleman's words and manner, his young friends all turned towards him with looks that mutely asked the question which only Lance Roslyn put into plain words:

"What, then, do you mean, my dear uncle, by stating that Nea is the richest heiress in the city?"

"I mean to state a *fact*, my dear nephew. I mean to state that Nerissa Lovel, as the next of kin to the late Mordaunt Lovel, who died intestate seven years ago last March, is sole heiress of Bright Water Park, one of the finest estates in the county of Sussex in England, with a rent roll of forty thousand pounds a year! Is that plain English? Does *that* sound like a joke?" demanded the old gentleman.

"That is very plain English, and it sounds—prodigiously like a joke!" replied the astonished lieutenant.

"It *cannot* be possible!" murmured Nerissa, too deeply moved to speak above her breath; for, not the most selfish and avaricious miser had ever coveted the possession of wealth for his own sake more ardently than the unsel-

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fish and generous young girl longed for it for the sake of others—for the comfort of comforting, for the delight of delighting, all whom she could help or please.

And now the paradise she longed for seemed possible!

No wonder she listened with suspended breath to hear of it.

"Uncle," said Eldiva, "where did you get your information? Are you quite sure that it is reliable? All this seems very improbable, you know. Heaven grant that it may be true for Nea's sake!"

"I got my information from perfectly authentic sources, Mrs. John Daw," replied the old gentleman, slightly nettled that his own judgment should be called in question by his niece, "and that information is perfectly reliable, madam. So, strange and improbable as you consider it, you may now thank Heaven for Nea's sake."

"I beg your pardon, my dear uncle; the wisest men may be sometimes imposed upon by false reports, and I simply feared that such might have been the case with you in regard to this rich inheritance of Nerissa's," said Eldiva.

"Set your heart at rest, my dear; it is all right, all right," replied Uncle Jubal, his good humor quite restored.

Lance Roslyn, who had been a silent and thoughtful listener to this colloquy, now spoke for the first time:

"Mordaunt Lovel, of Bright Water Park, from whom Nea inherits this estate, has been dead, you say, for more than seven years—"

"Yes, seven years last March!—Nearly eight years now!" interrupted Mr. Wells.

"Then how is it that Nea's inheritance has never been heard of until now, uncle?"

"Because Neil Carnes, who is the next heir after Nea, being descended from a lower branch of the family, as

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she is from the upper, has contrived to make good his bad claim, and has usurped her property for the last six years!" Mr. Wells explained.

"*That* was the reason, then, why he pretended he was going to take me to Europe, and instead of doing so, lured me into the mountains of Virginia and tried to lose me there!" said Nerissa, with half-suppressed vehemence.

"Yes, that was undoubtedly the reason," assented the old gentleman.

"And for his deceiving us all and pretending to be in Paris with Nerissa when he was really in England and she in the mountain wildernesses of Virginia, lost to the knowledge of all her friends."

"Yes," assented Mr. Wells.

"Uncle Jubal, from whom did you gain this intelligence in regard to Neil Carnes' usurpation of Nea's inheritance?" demanded Lance.

"From the fountain head, my dear boy! From Neil Carnes himself," said Mr. Wells.

"'From Neil Carnes himself!'" echoed Lance and Eldiva simultaneously.

"Yes, my dears, from him, himself."

"Carnes told you the tale of his own dishonor!" exclaimed Lance Roslyn, in amazement.

"Yes, my boy, he told it to me, or rather wrote it to me, which amounts to much more than the same thing," gravely replied the old gentleman.

"Was it—a death-bed confession? Has he passed away?" Eldiva inquired, breathing the question in an awe-struck whisper.

"Not a bit of it! He is alive and likely to live! He is in as healthy a state of body as he ever was before! and in a much healthier state of mind than he ever en-

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joyed, as may be seen by his willingness to resign his usurped estate to the rightful heiress."

"I cannot understand it," said Lance, reflectively.

"Nor I!" added Eldiva.

Nea said nothing, but *looked* the most thoughtful of the three.

"Oh, yes! You could understand it well enough if the sinner had been thrown from his horse and received a fatal injury, or been exposed to contagion and caught a deadly fever, and so been brought face to face with death and judgment, for you young people live in externals and feel and reason from externals; but you cannot understand how a man may reap all the material profits of his sin, and yet lose his mental peace, and suffer so from the loss that to regain his peace he may be willing to renounce his profits."

"No, for we have had no personal experience of the sort," said Lance, quickly.

"My young friend, you may learn from observation, as well as from experience!" replied Uncle Jubal.

"And is the case you cited that of Neil Carnes, sir?" gravely inquired Eldiva.

"Yes, my dear, it is. The conscience of the man has driven him to make confession and restitution. No fear of death or judgment constrains him, for he is in the prime of life and health. He succeeded perfectly in all his plans; in suppressing the truth in regard to the existence of Nerissa Lovel, the rightful heiress, and in usurping her estate; but no sooner did he feel secure in its possession than he grew wretched in his security. He was not addicted to any vices, as we know, or he might have drowned conscience in his desperation; but fortunately for him, as for his wronged niece, he could not do this. He struggled with his conscience for six years, during which he has unlawfully held Nerissa's

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estate, and finally he has written to me, told me the whole story of his abduction of Nea and his usurpation of her estate; of his repentance and desire to make atonement, and of his wish that I should seek out the injured girl in her exile at Greenmont, Virginia.

"He does not know, then, that Nerissa has been rescued and restored to her friends, here?" said Lance.

"He knows but little about her since he left her with a family of the name of Roach in Greenmont. His great anxiety now is that Nea may be found alive and well, and in a condition to enjoy her estate. He suggests that her education may have been neglected, but that, if all else be right with her, and her eyesight be recovered, she may be put to school for two years, as she is now but eighteen."

"Ah! he does not know that her sight has been restored these five years past, and that she has graduated with honors from her academy after a three years' course of study," said Eldiva.

"I repeat that he knows but little about her since he left her in the mountains of Virginia," said Mr. Wells.

"You have written to him, Uncle Jubal? You have told him good news of me?" said Nerissa.

"Yes, my dear, of course. But he has not yet had time to receive my letter," replied the old gentleman.

"Nerissa, give me your hand, love. Now, I do, in all sincerity, congratulate you on your good fortune," said Eldiva, drawing the young heiress to her side and kissing her fondly.

"I can scarcely believe this to be all real yet, Diva; but if it *should* be so, I will endow the Orphan Asylum. Oh! what a happiness it would be to do that and other things!" exclaimed the girl.

"And now, young people, do you know what I advise?" inquired Mr. Wells.

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"No, Uncle Jubal. What is it?" inquired Lance.

"It is this—But first, you must know that it is necessary for Nerissa Lovel to go to England," said Mr. Wells.

"I—yes, I suppose it is, since you mention it; but I had not thought of it before," Lance admitted, regretfully.

"And it is necessary that some one should go with her."

"Yes, I presume so; of course."

"Some proper male escort."

"Y-e-s," assented Lance, slowly.

"Now, then, this is what I advise for the best—that as you and Nerissa are engaged, you marry at once and embark for England."

"Oh, Uncle Jubal! if I might be so happy!" exclaimed the young lieutenant, with his countenance radiant of joy.

"Well, there is nothing to hinder you, my boy!"

"If I could *only* get an extension of leave!"

"'An extension of leave,' indeed! Don't even ask for it. Resign your commission in the Navy. Now is a time of profound peace when you may resign with honor. You don't want your post, and many a young man does want it. Leave it for some young fellow who needs it more than you do, and devote yourself to some one who needs *you* more than the Navy does—to little Nea here. Marry her. Take her to England. Settle down, both of you, at Bright Water Park, and trust me, you will find work enough in the proper management of that large estate to occupy all the time and energy you have at command, even though you may have the help of an experienced bailiff. And, besides, young gentleman, as Nerissa Lovel's oldest relative and natural guardian I shall oppose your marriage with her unless you resign

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from the Navy. I am not going to have the young wife either left alone with a lot of strangers in England, or dragged all over the navigable globe after a sea-faring husband, you understand."

"Nea! Nea! Nearest and Dearest! I am giddy, giddy with all this sudden happiness. What do you say? Speak, love, speak," eagerly whispered Lance.

"Listen to Uncle Jubal, Lance, dear: listen to Uncle Jubal. He is older and wiser than we are, and he knows what is best," shyly whispered the maiden in reply.

"Then we will take his advice, Nea, darling."

"Yes, Lance."

"Bless you, Nea."

"And there is no time to be lost, said Mrs. Joyce Wells, speaking for the first time. "We must see at once to having Nea's outfit prepared for the voyage. We may as well go up to Stetinius' and see what new goods he has got in, and call and see if we can get Catharine Johnson or Nancy Greenwell in here to sew; and it would be well if we could engage both of them, for there will be so much for them to do."

"That is just like your Aunt Joyce; she always wants to make reality more real by going straight to work on something practical at once," exclaimed Uncle Jubal, with a proud and affectionate glance towards his happy old helpmate.

"Then, after an early dinner, we will go out. Jubal, my dear, you will see that the sleigh is cleaned and brought around, and foot-stoves put in it. And, girls, one of you get a pencil and piece of paper and let us think of what will be wanted and put it down in a list. It will save a great deal of time and trouble in the shopping."

All was therefore arranged according to Uncle Jubal and Aunt Joyce's advice.

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After a early dinner taken in their private parlor, the three ladies, leaving the two gentlemen *tete-a-tete* by the fire-side, went in the sleigh, driven by Gad, to do the immense amount of shopping they deemed necessary to the double requirements of a marriage and a long sea-voyage. Having accomplished as much as they could manage in that department, they hunted up the dressmaker and the seamstress, succeeded in engaging them both to come on the following Tuesday, and then they returned to an early tea, which, like their dinner, they took in their own apartment where they found Uncle Jubal and Lance Roslyn still lounging in arm-chairs at opposite chimney corners, and engaged in talking over the present family situation.

At the tea-table, a trifling matter that had been forgotten in the early part of the day's discussion was now brought up by Aunt Joyce.

"You say, Jubal, that the marriage must take place immediately," she said, suspending her tea-cup on its way to her lips and looking over the tops of her spectacles.

"Yes, of course, I do, for they must be safe across the ocean before the equinoctial storms come on in the latter part of March, and of course they must be married before they sail; so they must be married immediately," replied the old match-maker.

"Hum! 'Immediately!' That cannot be taken literally, of course! They cannot well be married this minute, this hour, or even this day. Immediately means within a few weeks, I reckon."

"It means, Joyce, my dear, by the middle of January at farthest."

"And this is the 31st of December! Short notice! but if the young people see no objection I will make none," said Aunt Joyce.

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The young people were quite willing to leave the whole matter to the old people so long as the latter planned to advance their marriage, instead of retarding it.

The wedding day was finally fixed for Tuesday the 16th of January, and in the meantime passage was to be secured in the cabin of the *Flying Angel* packet which was to sail from Baltimore on the 20th, bound for Liverpool.

When all these points were satisfactorily arranged, as it was late, the three young ones bade their old friends good night with a promise to meet them at church the next day, which was Sunday, the 1st of January, and also to go with them to the President's New Year's Reception on Monday.

And, my dearest Eldiva! after the marriage and departure of your cousins, Lance and Nea, you will think of our desire that you should leave the asylum and make your home with us," said the kindly old gentleman, as he shook Eldiva by the hand.

"Oh, yes, my dear girl! Make up your mind to return with us when we go home, and we will be sure to cheer you up and make you happy," added the amiable old lady.

"I thank you very much, Uncle Jubal and Aunt Joyce. I am about to resign my situation, and I shall be very glad to find my City of Refuge in your house," replied Eldiva, gratefully.

The sleigh was waiting for them at the door, with Gad on the driver's seat.

Lance put the two young ladies in their places, and having covered them up warmly in the soft, rich afghans with which the interior was lined, he took his place beside the coachman, who started his horses to the sound of merry bells, and they flew over the frozen snow

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and under the moonlight sky, and in a very short time reached the asylum.

As the hour was so late, the young lieutenant declined his cousin's invitation to enter the house, and as soon as the door was opened by old Ambrose, he bade his companions good-night and returned to the sleigh to be driven to his lodgings by Gad.

CHAPTER XXXVI.

MARRIAGE BELLS.

When Eldiva and Nerissa entered the parlor they found a roaring wood fire in the open chimney, and the customary kettle of chocolate simmering on the hearth, and three china cups on a little waiter on the table, the whole presided over by Mrs. Dunn, who sat in an arm-chair, resting after her day's duties.

"Just throw your bonnets and shawls on the table there, dears, and come near the fire. I thought you would be cold, so I have had a big log put on to keep it up," said Mrs. Dunn, cordially, as she arose and pushed back her chair to make more room for the young ladies.

"You are always so good to us, Ruth, dear," said Eldiva, as she and Nerissa drew their chairs up to the fire and put their feet on the fender.

Ruth Dunn smiled, took up the kettle of chocolate and filled the cups, and handed one to Eldiva and another to Nerissa, taking the third herself.

And there over the pot of chocolate Eldiva imparted the news of the day—the great news of Nea's rich inheritance and her near marriage.

Mrs. Dunn was filled with surprise and sympathy, and warmly congratulated the little bride-elect.

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"And after New Year's, when the school duties are resumed here and will take up nearly all my time, Nea is to go to her aunt and uncle at the Indian Queen Tavern where she will remain under their protection until her marriage," added Eldiva.

Ruth Dunn repeated her congratulations, and then the trio finished their chocolate in silence.

"Now, confidence for confidence, my dears," said Ruth Dunn, as soon as she had washed and put away the china cups and the kettle, and had returned to her seat by the fire. "I have received another letter from my son. He writes that his patron, Lord John Daw, has been detained for a few days by business; but that all his party are quite well, and expect certainly to be in Washington before the end of January.

Eldiva's heart gave a bound of joy. Now, then, she would have time to give the managers warning and retire from the asylum before the arrival of Roderick Dunn should afford the chance of his meeting her. But in the midst of her own self-congratulation she felt a pang of pity for poor Ruth Dunn, who again, after so many repetitions, felt the sorrow of a hope deferred.

"This is a disappointment to you, Ruth, dear," she said.

"Yes, it is a disappointment on one hand, and a relief on the other; for now I shall have an opportunity of honorably withdrawing from my position here before my son's arrival," cheerfully replied Ruth.

Eldiva stared at the matron.

"Are you *also* going to leave the asylum?" inquired she.

"Yes, my dear; for there are reasons, strong reasons, why I should do so before my son's arrival. Mrs. Radcliffe, the President of the Board of Managers, happened to be in the city to-day, and called at the asylum. I

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then advised her of my intention to send in my resignation to the management at their next meeting, and begged that she would immediately see to securing a successor."

"That must have surprised her as much as it has surprised me," said Eldiva.

"It did, indeed. And she sought by every argument to induce me to remain; but I assured her that nothing but absolute necessity compelled me to resign. But, my dear Eldiva, what did you mean by asking me, 'Are you *also* going to leave the asylum?' Surely, my dear, you do not contemplate resignation of your place here?"

"Yes, I do, Ruth. My letter of resignation will be laid before the board of managers at their next meeting. And the motive of my action is, like your own, one of absolute necessity. If Mrs. Radcliffe should be in town to-morrow, I shall call on her and inform her of my intention, so that she may advertise for my successor here," said Eldiva, rather sadly.

"Dear me! the board of lady managers will think the very foundation of the institution is crumbling if their 'very much esteemed matron and teacher'—as they term us in their report—should fall away from them at the same time! And the poor children!" said Ruth, with a sudden change of tone; "they will not only lose us, whom they love so dearly, but they will lose Nerissa's holiday visits and Lance's Christmas dolls and ribbons!"

"Oh! Mrs. Dunn," said Nea, earnestly, "they may miss *us*, but they shall not miss our holiday gifts. I will never forget the children—never! never! I mean to make a large donation to the asylum, and every Christmas and every Easter send over gifts for them! That is the reason—*one* reason—why I am so *glad* to be rich."

"I know you will keep your promise, dear girl, though

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I shall not be here to see its fulfillment," replied Ruth Dunn.

"And now," said Eldiva, rising, "as it is after eleven o'clock I think we had better cover up the fire and go to bed."

The matron's advice was followed, and all the house was soon buried in darkness, silence and repose.

The next morning Mrs. Dunn undertook to marshal the orphans to their places in the church and to keep them in order there, leaving Eldiva to go with Nerissa and Lance to meet Uncle Jubal and Aunt Joyce at another place of worship, and to go afterward and spend the day with these relatives at their hotel.

Uncle Jubal and Aunt Joyce were conscientious observers of the Sabbath, who attended church twice every Sunday and who would countenance no discussion of worldly affairs or reading of worldly books or papers on that day, so there was no mention made of Nea's change of fortune or of her approaching marriage with Lance.

No, nor would Uncle Jubal ever allow his horses to be taken out on the Lord's day, except in cases of urgent necessity. So that when night came, Lance Roslyn had to escort his betrothed and her cousin home on foot.

The next day was a great day in Washington. It was the occasion of President Jackson's first New Year's levee, and from an early hour in the forenoon the streets and avenues leading towards the White House were thronged with foot passengers, horses and carriages, all wending thitherward.

Mr. and Mrs. Wells called in their coach for Eldiva and Nerissa, who were waiting to accompany them to the great gathering.

Eldiva had overhauled her trousseau of nine years back and modernized dresses for herself and Nerissa, and now they appeared well arrayed.

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Eldiva wore a rich black velvet pelisse, and black velvet hat with white marabout feathers, a white swan's-down boa and muff, and white kid gloves. This simple and severe costume of black and white, which must have been so trying to almost any other style of woman, was very becoming to the clear-skinned, dark-haired and dark-eyed little beauty.

Nerissa wore a rich crimson silk dress, and a Chinchilla spencer and hat and white kid gloves, and looked, it is needless to say, very beautiful.

But the dress of the young people was nothing to the gorgeousness of the old folks.

Aunt Joyce wore a dress of white satin brocade embroidered in alternate groups of large silver or gold roses; over this she wore a cape of fine ermine, and her hands, covered with long kid gloves, were hidden in a large muff of the same costly fur. On her head, above the silver hair, which was dressed in large puffs around her forehead, she wore a Queen Caroline bonnet, an enormous edifice of white velvet, satin and lace, the flaring inside front of which was a rich parterre of white roses and the towering crown of which was a grove of white feathers, ribbon bows and loops. This costume was stunning, but true of the times.

As for Uncle Jubal. The costume of the last century had gone out with the period, yet Uncle Jubal, with a few more very old gentlemen of the day, still persisted in wearing it; and now Mr. Wells appeared in cocked hat, powdered hair, blue velvet cut-away coat, white brocade satin vest, white buckskin short breeches, long white silk stockings and low shoes, with shining silver buckles.

He doffed his hat as he handed his two young relatives into the coach and seated them on the front cushions, while he took his own place beside his wife on the back

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ones, and he held it in his hand during the long drive up Pennsylvania Avenue to the White House.

Passing in at the gate, they found their coach in the rear of a long procession of carriages reaching from that spot to the distant door of the house. And other carriages were constantly coming up behind theirs.

It was fully an hour before the slow movement of this long line of vehicles before them allowed their coach to draw up before the portal of the Executive Mansion, where at length they alighted and entered behind a crowd who were pressing in towards the reception room, where stood, attended by his staff, the illustrious soldier and statesman whose memory is still fresh in the hearts of his countrymen; where stood also his beloved niece, the graceful and accomplished Mrs. Donelson, who did the honors of the White House during the administration of her widowed uncle.

Our party pressed forward, or rather *were* pressed on by those behind until they found themselves standing before the President.

Mr. Wells handed his card to the marshal in attendance, who read the name and presented the visitor to the President and Mrs. Donelson. Then Mr. Wells presented Mrs. Wells, Mrs. Daw and Miss Lovel. Bows and courtesies were ceremoniously but rather hastily exchanged, as the visitors were pressed forward by those behind, and pressed onward into the long East Room, where they found themselves in the midst of a brilliant but rather mixed assembly of foreign ministers and ambassadors in their court costumes; officers of the Army and Navy, in their glittering uniforms; Senators and members of the House of Representatives, civil and municipal dignitaries, citizens and strangers, and crowds of ladies of all ages and styles, with more or less costly and elegant toilets.

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A band of music was in full blast.

Mr. Wells, with his wife on his arm, promenaded slowly through the crowd, followed by Eldiva and Nerissa walking together, until they met Lieutenant Roslyn, who had paid his respects to the President earlier in the morning, at the hour when the officers of the army and navy were received, and he had been waiting for the arrival of his friends ever since.

They were greeted by him with great pleasure.

"I was feeling quite lost in this great crowd!" laughed Lance, as he drew Nerissa's arm within his own, leaving Eldiva to the escort of his brother officer, Lieutenant North, who now joined their party.

"This is quite as it should be!" said Uncle Jubal, with a sigh of satisfaction, as he led the way with his gay old wife. "We are all properly paired off now; but I assure you, young gentlemen, with all these young ladies under my sole charge, I was feeling quite like a three-tailed bashaw until you came to relieve me."

"Mind how you talk, Jubal, my dear," said Aunt Joyce in an admonishing tone.

He pressed her arm closer to his side, laughed softly and walked on in silence.

They finally drove back to the Indian Queen Tavern, where they kept Eldiva, Nerissa, and Lance to dinner.

In the afternoon the whole party, including Jubal and Aunt Joyce, went to the asylum to witness the magic lantern show that the young lieutenant had prepared for the entertainment of the orphan children.

The exhibition and the feast that followed it both went off well, and wound up the Christmas holidays in a highly satisfactory manner to every one concerned.

The next day the school duties at the asylum were resumed; and Nerissa, leaving Eldiva at her post, went

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to the Indian Queen to live under the protection of her aunt and uncle until her marriage.

Lance Roslyn also changed his quarters from Fuller's, at the corner of Fifteenth Street and Pennsylvania Avenue, to the Indian Queen, to be under the same roof with his betrothed and her friends.

A few days later their party was augmented by the arrival of Avonia Sothoron and Phœbus Verne, who had been spending the Christmas holidays, with a pleasant company of friends and relatives, at a gay country house, where they had enjoyed themselves much more than they could have done in the fashionable circles of Washington City.

They had now come up to the capital, to be present at the wedding of Lancelot Roslyn and Nerissa Lovel, the preparations for which were now rapidly advancing.

At the Orphan Asylum, Mrs. Dunn and Eldiva were preparing to transfer their charges to their successors in office.

Notwithstanding all that was done to make the parting cheerful, there were many tears shed on both sides when their beloved teacher and matron took leave of the orphan children.

Ruth went to a private boarding-house on Pennsylvania Avenue, kept by an amiable widow of the name of Plunket, and Eldiva joined her friends at the Indian Queen Tavern on the Saturday evening preceding the marriage of Lance Roslyn and Nerissa Lovel.

Tuesday, the 17th of January, their wedding day, dawned clear and cold.

Every member of the family party were up and astir at an early hour.

They met at a simple breakfast served in their private parlor and then separated to dress for the ceremony.

Avonia Sothoron, assisted by the two dressmakers,

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officiated at Nerissa's toilet. The wedding costume, the gift of Uncle Jubal and Aunt Joyce, consisted of an English thread lace dress, looped with orange flowers, over a white satin trained skirt, the bodice made low on the neck and short in the sleeves; neck and arms adorned with pearl necklaces and bracelets; dark hair worn in natural curls, crowned with a wreath of orange flowers, and covered with a vail of English thread lace that fell like a mist to her feet. White silk embroidered kid gloves, and white kid boots completed the costume. In her hand she carried a bouquet of rare white exotics of exquisite beauty and perfume, and a gossamer handkerchief of finest lace.

Her two young bridesmaids, the little daughters of Doctor Hamilton, wore dresses of India muslin looped with white roses.

Eldiva wore a ruby-colored velvet dress—a relic of her inexhaustible trousseau—a hat of the same with white ostrich plumes, a cashmere shawl and white kid gloves.

Avonia Sothoron a blue-flowered white brocade looped over a white skirt, a white beaver hat and feather fastened with a diamond *margarite*, and carried on her arm a white merino shawl to be worn only in the carriage.

But, oh! for the pen of a royal drawing-room reporter to describe the costume of Aunt Joyce and Uncle Jubal.

Aunt Joyce wore a white brocade dress, flowered all over with golden roses and silver lilies, and looped over a white satin skirt trimmed with deep flounces of white Brussels lace; around her shoulders a deep ermine cape, and on her head the vast and magnificent Queen Caroline bonnet of white velvet, satin, lace, feathers and flowers, whose weight had nearly broken her neck at President Jackson's New Year's levee.

Uncle Jubal persisting in the costume of fifty years before wore a claret-colored velvet coat, a long white

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brocade waistcoat, white doeskin knee breeches, long white silk stockings and low shoes. In his hands he carried a cocked hat and a pair of white doeskin gauntlets.

There were three carriages drawn up before the tavern door, to convey the wedding party to church.

And when the ceremony was concluded with the sweet and solemn words—"Those whom God hath joined together, let not man put asunder!"—the young pair felt that the Lord had indeed joined them together, not only from to-day and for the term of their natural lives, but from the beginning and for all eternity, and that no power of man on earth or angel in heaven could ever put them "asunder."

The benediction was pronounced and friends and relatives left their pews and crowded around the newly married pair, with brightest smiles and warmest congratulations. Then the bridal party went into the vestry where the marriage was duly registered. Finally they left the church to re-enter their carriages.

They drove back to the Indian Queen Tavern, where an elegant collation had been laid in Mr. and Mrs. Wells' parlor, to which only the members of the family, the bridesmaids and groomsmen, and very few of the most intimate friends, had been invited.

The little f ast passed off pleasantly, and when it was over, Nerissa retired with her girl friends to change her wedding dress for a travelling suit of soft gray merino, with a chinchilla hat and mantle and muff to match.

"You look like a squirrel in your mottled gray coat, Nea!" was the only criticism upon this pretty, modest toilet; and it was made, of course, by Avonia Sothoron.

The company were now all assembled in the private parlor waiting for the stage-coach to call for the young pair; for Lance and Nerissa had declined to go to the seaport in state, by a private carriage, and had chosen

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to travel by the common stage-coach like ordinary passengers.

When the huge vehicle was heard rattling up before the doors of the tavern, Lance and Nerissa took leave of all their friends except Uncle Jubal, Aunt Joyce, and Eldiva, who went down to the sidewalk with them, saw them into the coach and received their last adieux, only at the last moment.

The stage-coach started with its freight of happiness and hope, and the friends that were left behind returned to the guests who were still lingering in the parlor.

Here Uncle Jubal proposed a final glass of wine to the health of the happy pair; after drinking which the company dispersed to their homes.

"And now!" exclaimed Uncle Jubal, turning to his two adopted children, "while our hands are in we might as well go on! When are you two going to make a match of it?"

Both the young people so suddenly addressed blushed violently, but did not reply.

"You were thirty years old your last birth-day, you know, Phœbus. And Avonia is not far from twenty-eight. Gracious goodness! Why your aunt and myself had been married ten years when we were your age!" added the old gentleman.

"It is not my fault, Uncle Jubal! I would marry to-morrow! I would marry *to-day*, if Avonia would only consent!" bluntly replied Mr. Verne.

"Why won't she consent, then?" demanded Mr. Wells, turning sharply on his niece.

"Because she doesn't choose to!" saucily retorted Miss Sothoron. "I am sure Phœbus and I see quite enough of each other *now*; if we were to see much more we might be even worse friends than we are!"

"Oh!—Well! I don't insist on your marrying each

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other if you don't like to do so, but good gracious alive! marry *some* body! I don't believe in 'single blessedness!' I don't believe there *is*, or ever *was*, or ever *will be* such a thing. There young people. You have my opinion and you may reflect upon it, while I go out to smoke my pipe!" concluded Uncle Jubal, as he arose and left the room, and all but Eldiva followed.

After Eldiva was left alone in the parlor she rang for a waiter and ordered a hack to be at the door for her use in a quarter of an hour.

Then she went to her own room and changed her velvet dress for a black merino suit, a black beaver hat and a warm Shetland wool shawl, and then passed down and out to the hack that was in waiting.

She entered it and gave the order to the hackman to drive to the Congress Burying Ground.

A drive of three quarters of an hour's duration brought her to the great gate.

She alighted and went first to the street door of the keeper's house and rapped.

The hunchback opened the door and bowed respectfully to the visitor, as he made way for her to enter the office.

"I shall leave the city in a few days, and for a long and indefinite period. I have come this afternoon to make a final visit to the shrine I care for, and to ask you to find some one who, for a liberal compensation, would engage to keep the spot in good order during my absence. Do you think you can oblige me in this matter?" inquired Eldiva, as she drew a chair to the fire and sat down, for the day was very cold.

"Oh, yes. ma'am, it is always easy to find a man who will work for good wages, I think," replied the hunchback.

"Then engage one, and let me know the terms. It will require but an hour's attention about once a week,

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I suppose, and for that I am willing to pay very liberally. You can send to me at the Indian Queen Hotel," said Eldiva.

"Would you like to visit the place this afternoon, ma'am?" inquired the hunchback, taking his hat from the peg, preparatory to attending the lady.

"Yes, I am going there now, but I wish to go *alone*," replied Eldiva, decisively, as she nodded and passed out of the back door leading into the cemetery.

The keeper looked after her gravely and thoughtfully.

"Now, in the name of all the riddles that ever were written, why does that lady care so much for the grave of Old Man Condon? He can't be anything to *her* or to *hers!* Why, he must have died and been buried there before she was born! It passes my comprehension, and I give it up for good and all, there!" concluded the hunchback, with a grave shake of his head.

In the meantime Eldiva had gone down the main walk, and turned into the path leading to the knoll in the south-east corner of the inclosure where lay the grave she was seeking.

All the ground was covered with snow, except this one mound, from which it had been cleared, leaving the grass beneath as green as if it had been the spring instead of the winter; and the shining holly wreaths, with glossy dark-green leaves and bright scarlet berries that she had laid there at Christmas, were as fresh and beautiful as ever.

Eldiva knelt and prayed beside this mound, stooped and kissed the ground, and then arose with a sigh, and left the spot.

As she passed again through the keeper's lodge, she reminded him of his promise.

"You will be sure to find some one to take charge of

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that lot and send him to me at the Indian Queen," she said.

"I will be sure to do it before another day is over our heads, ma'am," replied the hunchback.

And Eldiva said "good afternoon," and passed out of the lodge.

She re-entered her hack and drove back to the tavern in time to dress and join her friends at dinner.

In the evening Uncle Jubal—who was determined to make the most of his time and opportunities in the gay capital—took his whole party to the theatre to see a new theatrical star—a tragic actor of the period, by the name of Pelby.

And after the performance they had an oyster supper at the tavern.

CHAPTER XXXVII.

RUTH DUNN'S HOME.

While Uncle Jubal and Aunt Joyce, the indefatigable old couple, were giving themselves up with more than youthful enthusiasm to the enjoyment of their holiday, with their headquarters at the Indian Queen Tavern, and drawing into their merry sphere the young people of their acquaintance—Phœbus Verne, Milo Yorke, Imperia North, Avonia Sothoron, and even the sad Eldiva—Ruth Dunn, in her quiet boarding-house, was waiting between hope and fear, desire and dread, the arrival of Lord John Daw's party from their long travels.

She did not like her boarding-house—not but that her landlady was the very gem and rose of landladies—but just because it *was* a boarding-house and there was no real privacy about it.

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Ruth conceived a fancy to return to her old home, if possible, and to welcome her son *there*, where years before she had parted from him.

So she took the avenue stage and rode over to Georgetown, got off at the stand, and walked out to the market gardener's cottage.

But the market gardener had gone and the house was shut up.

On inquiring among the old neighbors, Ruth learned that the family had emigrated to the West, and that the house was for rent.

This suited Ruth's plans much better than she could have expected. For now, by taking the whole of the little house, she could have all the privacy she needed. She went to the landlord that same morning and engaged the house by the month.

Then she hired a colored man and woman to go into it and whitewash the walls, scrub the floors, and wash the windows.

Two days later Ruth caused her little stock of furniture to be conveyed from the warehouse where she had kept it stored, and had it re-arranged in the very same rooms she had formerly occupied.

She did not furnish the remainder of the house which had been tenanted by the market gardener, for she had nothing to put in the vacant apartments; nor did she regret this, for *they* had no precious associations for her, and she did not even expect to remain long in any part of the building.

Ruth arranged the furniture in her own room just precisely as it had stood on the morning that her son had bid her good-by to go on his long travels—so very much longer than she or even he had anticipated at the time.

The same neat rag carpet, the work of her own hands,

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covered the floor; the triangular cupboard, with its glass doors above and wooden doors below, stood in the corner near the fire-place; the old-fashioned chest of drawers stood between the two front windows; the blue paper shades hung before them, and the white dimity curtains with the ball fringe draped them.

The patchwork quilt covered the neat bed; the old rocking-chair; the familiar little round table that served for meals, for writing, or for sewing, were all in their places.

Lastly, the same bright little wood fire in the open chimney and the same oil lamp for the evening were lighted.

Here Ruth Dunn sat, at her solitary tea, on the night of the day when she had moved in.

She was quite alone in the house, as the house itself was alone on the square. Yet she was not afraid, for there was scarcely any such thing as an act of violence or lawlessness known in that quiet and orderly neighborhood.

No, she was not afraid to be alone in that lonely house; on the contrary, she found the profound solitude and silence most congenial to her heart after the noise and excitement of the last few weeks, and especially so in her present frame of mind.

Here she could calm her feelings, collect her thoughts, reflect on her past and her future, and patiently wait the coming of her son and his father from their long, long years of travel.

What effect would this strange reunion have upon the future lives of all three?

After all these long and weary years of heart-wasting division, her husband, in his old age, had providentially discovered—what?

Why, that their love marriage, which they had been

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fatally mislead by false reports into believing to have been too hastily and all illegally contracted, was in deed and truth both lawful and sacred.

But ah! what a mockery of fate to find this out *only* after a lifelong immolation of their affections on the altar of a mistaken duty—*only* after a lifelong separation for conscience sake!

They had parted when he was a handsome man of forty years and she a happy wife of eighteen; now he was over seventy and she was forty-eight.

Oh, bitter, bitter mockery for them!

Yet, for their son's sake, this late discovery of the truth was to be sincerely rejoiced over.

Roderick was young, and life was all before him. No shadow of reproach could now rest upon his birth; no bar could be raised to his inheritance of a son's portion of his father's vast estates; and here in this free country, where the laws of primogeniture did not exist to cut off the younger children of a family from all share of the property, his portion would be equal to that of his elder brother. Yes! Mr. John Daw might, in time, and probably would, inherit his uncle's English title, but half, if not the whole, of the American estate would descend to Roderick!

Ruth Dunn, who had never had a mercenary thought for *herself* meditated on all these certainties and possibilities for her son.

Yes! though this strange discovery had come too late in life for the benefit of her aged husband or herself, yet it was not too late for that of their son.

Roderick would be rich, honored, and prosperous, and in his happiness his mother could be happy.

Ruth meditated over her solitary tea-table, not feeling lonely or fearful, but perfectly satisfied with the certainty that no visitor could "drop in" to disturb her quiet.

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She had left her new address in a sealed letter with the matron of the Orphan Asylum to be given to her son Roderick when he should call there to inquire for it; and she knew that no one else would come to interrupt her.

So, in the old home she stayed and waited for his arrival.

She did not expect to hear from him by letter again. She supposed that immediately on landing at Baltimore his party would set out and travel to Washington by a route as direct as the mail line, and so she felt sure that the first herald of her son's approach would be his own knock at the house door, or his footstep on the stairs.

Ruth Dunn watched and waited, and never left the house for five minutes at a time, lest Roderick should arrive during her absence.

She had laid in a sufficiency of provisions; she had spoken to a neighbor up the road to send her a pint of milk every morning, and she had a fine well in the back yard that supplied her with pure water. And if, with all these, she ever had an errand to be done in the town, she had only to go down to the front door and watch for the appearance of some poor child whom she could hire for a "fippinny bit" (six and one quarter cents) to do it for her.

And, as she watched and waited, the month went on.

How many times she heard that longed-for knock at the door, or foot on the stairs, and ran down to meet her son and to find that imagination had deceived her.

Whether he would appear morning, noon, or night she knew not; but now, as the last days of the month slipped away, she listened always.

At length he came.

It was the evening of the last day of the month. Ruth had taken her solitary tea and had cleared the table,

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trimmed the lamp, replenished the fire, swept the hearth, and sat down in her rocking-chair with the first volume of Cooper's "Spy," trying to forget her eager anxiety in that story. But all in vain, for every sense was on the alert, listening as she had listened for the last ten days and nights. How still it was! The silence not even broken by the chirping of a cricket on the hearth, for there was no cricket there to chirp.

Then, through the profound quiet came the sound of a succession of brisk knocks at the outer door.

Down dropped the book! Up sprang the reader! And Ruth flew down the stairs, pushed open the door, and threw herself into the arms of the tall stout man who stood on the threshold in the darkness.

"Oh, Roderick! Roderick, my son! At last! At last! Oh, thank Heaven!" she sobbed, for joy, on his breast.

"Dear, dear mother! Dear, best mother! I have come home at last, never to leave you again!" he said, holding her close to his heart and kissing her very tenderly.

"Thank Heaven! Oh, thank Heaven!" she sobbed at intervals.

"And how have you been, dear mother? How are you looking, I wonder? Come into the light where I can see your face. I don't believe you have grown a bit older. Come into the light and let me see," he said in fond merriment.

"Yes, come up, Roderick," she replied, pulling him toward the stairs.

He turned back for an instant to shut and lock the door, that she had forgotten all about, and then he followed her up stairs and into the old familiar room, where his childhood and youth had been passed.

"Why, it looks so natural! exactly as it did years ago,

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when I saw it last!" he exclaimed, with a smile of delight, as he gazed around.

"Yes, Roderick, I wanted it to look so," she said.

"And to think, since that I have been all over the world."

"Yes, Roderick."

"And yet it seems as it was but yesterday that I was here. And you, mother. Are you, too, unchanged? Let me look at you!" he exclaimed, putting his hands on her shoulders and turning her around to the light.

She smiled as she met his fond gaze and her smile made her face radiant and beautiful.

"No, I declare you have not changed. This is the same *dear* face that I have carried in my heart and seen in my dreams in all my long wanderings through these many years."

"*Have* you, Roderick? Have you borne me in memory so constantly, dear boy?"

"Have I not indeed? Who else had I to think of? But do you find *me* changed, dear mother?" he inquired, wheeling her gently around until *she* stood with her back to the lamp and *he* stood facing the light.

She looked at him lovingly and proudly as she said:

"Yes, dear boy, you have changed, but all for the better. You have grown stouter and darker, and you have a full brown beard. How handsome you are, dear Roderick."

"Ah! if any but a mother had said so, I should believe it! Mothers are always partial," he said, with a smile.

"But they are not blind. Now sit down, dear. Take this rocking chair and make yourself comfortable, while I get you a cup of tea—or coffee? Which do you prefer?" she inquired, as she gently forced him into her own easy-chair.

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"Neither, dear mother, neither. You need get nothing for me. We took supper at the Wolf's Head, where the stage-coach stopped at seven o'clock; and I could not eat or drink anything more to-night."

"Not—not—not even a cup of hot chocolate, my dear? I could get it for you in a very few minutes. Do let me," urged Ruth.

"No, no, indeed I need nothing! And I will not have you running around when I want you to sit down with me and have a good talk, after all these years!"

"Very well, Roderick, dear," assented Ruth, as she drew her little sewing chair near him.

"No, no! don't sit there, mother mine! I want you very close to me. Where is that little settee you used to have? Oh, there it is, to be sure, in its old place, and covered with the same identical flowered chintz pattern that I remember so well!" said the young man, as he pushed his arm-chair out of the way and then went and drew the short sofa up to the fireside.

"Now, then, mother darling, we can sit here together, *close* together, like a pair of true lovers, and talk comfortably. And we *have* always been sweethearts, have we not, mammy mine?" he inquired, as he adjusted the seat.

"*Always*, Roderick, my dear," she answered, as she put back her little sewing chair against the wall.

And when the mother and son were seated together on the sofa, with his arm wound affectionately around her waist, her head resting on his shoulder and her hand clasped in his, he said, in a much graver tone than he had yet spoken:

"Mother dear, I have so much to tell you! Ah, so much more than you could possibly imagine!"

"Yes, I know, I know you must have, Roderick."

"Ah, but you do *not* know," he sighed.

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Now Ruth had been very anxious to inquire after the well-being of Lord John Daw; but a strange reluctance to speak of him, a reluctance for which she could not account even to herself, had restrained her from asking any questions concerning him.

At this juncture, however, she became alarmed at the gravity of her son's words and manner, fearing that some evil had happened to the old nobleman. She asked:

"And—how is *he*, Roderick?"

"Lord John Daw?"

"Yes, my dear."

"He is as well as he has been for the last few weeks; but he is really more aged and infirm than his years would seem to warrant. His life has been a very sad one, as you know, mother; that circumstance may account for his premature old age."

"Ah, yes, yes; but, my dear Roderick, you have done what you could to cheer this cheerless age?"

"Oh, yes, yes, mother! Heaven knows that I have done so; I have gone *too far* to do so," sighed the young man.

"What, my dear? Gone too far to console him? Have you then, made known your identity to him? That was not going too far, Roderick. You were perfectly free to make yourself known to him as his son," said Ruth.

"That is precisely what I mean, dearest mother; yet I repeat, I have gone too far in my endeavors to make him happy in his old age, so far that I had nearly lost sight of those principles of rectitude you always instilled into my mind," repeated the young man, with another and a deeper sigh.

"I cannot believe that you could for a moment forget honor, or how your doing so could promote the peace or

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happiness of your—patron, unless, unless—" said Ruth, as her suspicions leaped to a long conclusion—"unless you have been concealing something to shield some person. Has young Mr. John Daw been going wrong? And have you been hiding his ill-doings from his father?" inquired Ruth, as she fixed her eyes upon the face of her son.

That face grew pale as marble under her gaze; but he answered frankly enough:

"No, mother. Mr. John Daw has never gone wrong to my knowledge. He was the model of rectitude that he seemed."

"I am glad to hear it. And how is his health now? Quite re-established?" inquired Ruth, choosing to ignore her son's self-condemnation, in the justice of which she did not for an instant believe.

Roderick did not answer her question, and she went on to say:

"I should think a man could never quite recover from the effects of such an experience. What an amazing adventure that was. The people of Washington talk of it even to this day! And only last autumn I happened to be in Dr. Hamilton's office waiting for him, and I picked up a medical pamphlet entitled, 'Remarkable Cases of Suspended Animation and Resuscitation After Apparent Death.' And the very first one cited was that of Mr. John Daw's restoration to life after he had been laid in the vault several hours! Do the family ever allude to the circumstance, Roderick?—Why, Roderick! Dear son! What is the matter? You are as pale as ashes!" she exclaimed, in some alarm.

"Do not be frightened, dearest mother! I am not ill—at least not ill in body! But I have a story to tell, which will startle you!—a confession to make which will shock you!—but which must be got through with this night—for to-morrow morning I must bring about the first interview between yourself and my father," said Roderick.

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CHAPTER XXXVIII.

THAT MYSTERY AT THE WOLF'S HEAD TAVERN.

"'A confession to make,' Roderick, my dear!" repeated Ruth Dunn, in some perplexity; but without the faintest suspicion that the words implied any sin upon the soul of that son in whose spotless integrity she had the most implicit faith.

"Yes, mother, dear, a confession to make to you, who must be my judge; for I declare to you in the beginning, that I do not know to what degree I have been culpable, or to what extent I am responsible for all that has happened," said the young man, sorrowfully.

Ruth Dunn began to feel much anxiety, but she forbore to express it, lest she should discourage his confidence.

"Mother, I want you now to go back in memory to that morning of the second of May, some nine years ago, when I returned from my fruitless journey to Locust Mills, in search of employment. Do you remember all that occurred on that morning?"

"Perfectly. It was a memorable morning, my dear. You came home in a state of agitation scarcely to be explained by the fact of your having met, as you said, the young lady in whom you had become so deeply interested," replied Ruth Dunn.

"And yet out of that unexpected meeting came the events that lead to this confession. But there were other circumstances that made the morning of my return home so memorable, my dear mother."

"Yes, for on that morning you received a favorable answer to your letter of application for the situation of amanuensis to an 'elderly gentleman' who had advertised for one in the *Intelligencer*, and whom then, for the

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first time, you ascertained to be Lord John Daw, and whom, a little later on, you learned from me to be your father. Ah, yes, that second of May was a memorable day, my dear," sighed Ruth Dunn.

"And the night that preceded the day was an even more memorable night," sighed the young man in response.

Ruth Dunn looked at her son with an uneasiness that she could not wholly conceal.

"I never told you all the story of that night, dear mother; nor should I tell you now, but that a crisis has arrived in our lives that renders it necessary to tell you that, and other things," said the young man, sorrowfully.

"Go on, Roderick," said his mother, in an encouraging tone.

"Mother," continued the young man, "you remember that I walked from Georgetown, out to Locust Mills on the first of May—the very day, as it happened, though I did not know it at the time, upon which Mr. John Daw and Miss Eldiva Lisburne were married in Washington."

"I remember, Roderick."

"And that on my return journey I walked back as far as the Wolf's Head Tavern, where, finding myself very much fatigued, I determined to stop and wait for the Baltimore and Washington stage, which would pass about half-past ten o'clock.

"Yes."

"And I engaged a room that I might lie down and sleep for a couple of hours before taking the stage-coach home."

"I remember."

"It is necessary to recall these circumstances to your mind, dear mother, in order to explain what followed."

"I understand, Roderick."

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"Well, I went to my room, and removing only my coat, I lay down on the outside of the bed to take a nap. I soon fell asleep, but was aroused by an unusual bustle in and around the tavern, caused by the arrival of the grand wedding party from Washington. Feeling hungry, I went down to see if I could get a bit of supper, and then I discovered that I had overslept myself and missed the Washington stage by which I had intended to return home.

"There was, therefore, nothing left for me to do but to walk to Washington in the dead of night, or to stop at the tavern until morning. I did not guess that upon my decision rested the destiny of three human lives. Yet, so it was."

"Roderick!" exclaimed the mother, in dismay.

"Yes; so it was. I decided to stop at the tavern until morning. I could scarcely get any attention, however, for everybody seemed to be occupied with the wedding party, who had been shown into a private parlor where they were to have supper. At length, however, I got a waiter to supply me with some bread and cheese and milk in a corner of the coffee-room. I had satisfied the cravings of my hunger, and had left the coffee-room, and was crossing the hall on my way to the bar, when my fate met me."

"Roderick! Roderick! Oh, my son, what do you mean?" demanded Ruth Dunn, in an agitated manner.

"Do not be alarmed, mother, but listen. As I was about to pass, the parlor door opened and three young ladies came out, crossed the hall, and went up stairs. The sight of the last one of the trio seemed to transfix me, for she was the beautiful unknown whom I had first seen and worshiped at the college exhibition of last year, and whom I had been vainly trying to find ever since. I never for a moment supposed her to be the *bride*, nor

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did the waiter, who had followed the three young ladies out of the parlor with a tray of glasses in his hands, and who then pointed out the supposed bride to me, in a tall, fair, queenly young woman who led the way. *That* mistake was another link in the chain of destiny that was being wound around our lives."

"Oh, my son! Go on!" sighed Ruth Dunn.

"Not to intrude upon these ladies, I waited until they had reached the head of the stairs before I began to follow them on my way to my own room. Just then, when the little, dark-haired beauty whom I had mistaken for the youngest bridesmaid, had reached the top stair, and I had my foot upon the bottom step, while I was gazing up after her, with all my soul in my eyes, I saw something white drop from her hands and flutter down to my feet. I stooped and raised it reverently and found that it was a delicate lace handkerchief, with the subtile odor of violet in it. When I looked up again, I saw that the three beauteous creatures had disappeared from the head of the stairs into the shadows of the upper hall."

"Ah, Roderick, my dear, you should then have taken that handkerchief to the office of the tavern and left it with the clerk," said Ruth Dunn, gravely.

"Doubtless, but I never even thought of doing so. I took it up stairs with the intention of hurrying after her and handing it to her, and with the longing hope of seeing her smile and hearing her speak. But, just as I reached the landing, I saw her half way down the hall entering a bedroom, in attendance, as I thought, upon the fair, imperial woman whom I took to be the bride. So, then, I went into my own room, which was dimly lighted by a wax candle in a sconce, and I held the elegant cobweb near the light to examine it closely. And then in its corner I found the name of its owner—*Eldiva*—minutely worked in dark hair."

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"You told me all this at the time of its occurrence, Roderick, my dear; and told me, also, how you kept the handkerchief and brought it home with you," said Ruth.

"Yes, mother; but just here, between my taking that handkerchief into my room and my bringing it home in the morning, there was a fearful hiatus in my story that I did not then dare to fill up, though I must do so now."

"Roderick! Roderick! what do you mean?" demanded the agitated woman.

"Listen, mother, and be my judge! I will confess everything—all my folly, all my madness, all my despair! I intended to restore that laced and perfumed toy; but I held it in my hands and pressed it to my lips and to my heart, and kissed and caressed it as if it had been a living thing; for it seemed to my fond imagining to be as a white dove that had flown from her bosom to mine. I know not how long I had sat there indulging in this fond foolishness—perhaps an hour, perhaps more—when, suddenly, a loud scream struck my ear. I sprang up and dashed out of my room to see what was the matter, when I saw, flying down the hall, in her white wrapper, and with her long, dark hair floating over her shoulders, this beauteous Eldiva, whom I supposed to be the youngest bridesmaid! And on meeting me she threw herself into my arms and clung around my neck, palpitating, trembling, shivering with some tremendous agitation!"

"Roderick! Roderick! You amaze me!" exclaimed Ruth Dunn, flushing all over the neck and face.

"She mistook me for some one else. She mistook me for her husband, to whom I bore an exact likeness. I did not know this then. I know it now. She had been frigthened out of her senses by something I know not what, and had rushed to my bosom for refuge, mistaking me in that half light, and by reason of my exact likeness to him, for her husband."

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"Oh, how fatal. And you! and you! what did you do?" breathed Ruth Dunn.

"What could a man do under the circumstances? I, not knowing that she mistook me for her husband—not even knowing that she *had* a husband; never suspecting her to be the bride; only seeing the young creature whom I worshiped, maddened by terror and clinging to me for protection—I, too, lost my self-control. I wound my arms around her quivering form, pressed her closely to my bosom, covered her face with kisses, filled her ears with tender, impassioned words, and was so absorbed in the deep joy of comforting and protecting her, that I scarcely heard or heeded a swiftly approaching step, until suddenly, without any apparent cause the trembling beauty raised her head, uttered a succession of piercing, heartrending shrieks, pushed me violently from her and fled, still shrieking, down the hall."

"Oh, fatal! fatal mistake. I see it all!" groaned Ruth Dunn.

"I swear to you, mother, by all I hold sacred on earth, and by all my hopes of Heaven, that she was as innocent as an infant, or as an angel. As for myself, I declare to you that I have no distinct recollection of what next happened. I was hurled from my heaven of bliss as suddenly as if I had fallen from the sky and struck the earth with a shock that stunned me. I did not then understand what had happened, or how it had happened; why this beauteous, frightened bird had flown to my bosom for refuge; or why she had fled, shrieking, from me. A sickening doubt entered my mind of this fair creature's sanity, a suspicion that she might be subject to fits of lunacy. As I lingered in the hall, two young ladies hurried past me and entered the room at the other end of the corridor where I had seen my frightened dove seek shelter. I stopped there to get news of her. I asked

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a chambermaid, who came into the hall, how the lady was who had been so badly frightened. The girl told me she heard the lady had grown calmer."

"And no one seemed to connect you in any way with the fatality of the night?" inquired Ruth.

"No one. I lingered in the hall and inquired of every one who passed, about the condition of the suffering lady, and was always told that she was quieter. Finally some one told me that she was going to return immediately to her friends in Washington. That did not surprise me at all; for I had heard earlier that the bridesmaids and groomsmen had attended the newly married pair only to the end of the first stage of their journey with the intention of returning to the city immediately. Yet I could not tear myself away from that tavern, or even from that upper hall, until at dawn of day, I saw a group of ladies and others come out of the room and go down stairs and enter carriages that were waiting at the door to take them away. Then I knew that *she* had gone, and the house had no further interest for me, so I set out to walk home—still in utter ignorance that the lovely girl who had flown into my arms for refuge from some unknown danger, was the bride of John Daw. Still in utter ignorance that her bridegroom had discarded and abandoned her for that most innocent indiscretion. Still—I swear to you, my mother!—in utter ignorance of all that I should have known, or—had the tumult of my whole nature been less distracting—I should have surmised.

"Had I paused in the halls and offices below stairs, I might have learned something from the talk of the people there.

"But I did not pause for a moment. Having paid my small bill in advance—as the rules of the house require of strangers without luggage—I walked straight out.

"Yet in that solitary walk through the deep forest, in

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the coolness of the early morning, my feverish excitement calmed down and then reflection brought to me some sense of my culpable share in the strange drama of the evening.

"I began to see that the young lady—bridesmaid, as I still supposed her to be—must in her phrenzied terror have mistaken me for some one else—some intimate friend or brother, or betrothed, to whose arms she had a *right* to fly for protection! I began to see that I had behaved like a brute or a madman to her! And I cursed my folly and cursed myself for an idiot.

"And the more I thought of it the worse I thought of myself. In this state of mind I came home," continued Roderick with a sigh.

"And I saw your distress," replied his mother, "and although you attempted to account for it by the surprise of meeting your inamorata at the Wolf's Head Tavern, I *knew* that you were keeping something back from me."

"I was not willingly withholding my confidence from you, dearest mother; but I *could* not tell you *then*; and I *would* not now, but that, as I said, a crisis in our lives has come that makes it necessary to do so."

"And when did you learn that the lady with whom you had this fatal adventure was the bride of Mr. John Daw?" inquired Ruth.

"On that same day that was so full of revelations for me!—on that same day on which you informed me that my father was living in the person of Lord John Daw, in whose service I had applied for a place?"

"How did you learn it?"

"By the simplest means. That morning when I left you I walked down to the public reading room at Fuller's Tavern, and, looking over the morning papers, saw the marriage of Mr. John Daw to Miss Eldiva Lisburne, and at the same time heard from the gossip of all the

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men in the room that the bridegroom had cast off his bride on account of some terrible calamity that had happened, through her own indiscretion! But the nature of which no one seemed to know."

"This must have been agonizing to you, my poor boy," said Ruth Dunn.

"Mother! there are no words strong enough to tell you how much I suffered! But I saw my duty then! I heard that the unhappy lady had returned to her own family at Shadow Hall, where she was lying very ill; and that the gentleman (?) had gone home to his father's house, at The Hill, and I determined to go at once and ask an interview with Mr. John Daw, give him the true version of the affair, and try to bring him to reason. I went out, hailed a stage that was passing and rode down the avenue. Every man in the stage was talking of the mystery at the Wolf's Head, or listening to some new theory of it.

"At the foot of Capitol Hill I got out and walked rapidly up to the house of Lord John Daw, which, as you know, is situated on its own large grounds, directly north of the Capitol Park.

"Well, mother, when I reached the house I was told by the servant who opened the door that Mr. John Daw had just set out for Baltimore, *en route* for Canada, where he expected to spend the summer; and that Lord John Daw kept his room and refused to see even his most intimate friends.

"Then I asked where a letter might reach Mr. John Daw on his route.

"The servant replied that he did not know, but would inquire of Mr. Richard Daly, his lordship's agent, who was in the house. I sat down in the hall while he went away to get the information wanted. He soon came back with a slip of paper on which a few lines were writ-

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ten, to the effect that Mr. John Daw's address would be at the publishing house of Mr. Matthew Carey, Philadelphia, for one week.

"I took this address, walked to the Capitol Library, sat down at one of the tables and wrote a long, full letter to Mr. John Daw, giving him the true version of my unfortunate rencounter with the lady in the upper hall of Wolf's Head Tavern, as fully and as frankly as I have given it to *you* to-night, dwelling on the facts that the hapless young lady was distracted with terror and took me for some one else when she flew into my arms for shelter; for that discovering me to be a stranger, she instantly fled from me; that before that moment I had never in my life seen her to speak to her, and had never seen or spoken to her since then. All this I begged him to put to the proof and so satisfy himself. Then I pleaded the cause of justice and mercy both for his own sake as well as for hers. And having finished my letter I posted it in time for the noon mail.

"This was on that memorable second of May that had been so fruitful in events to me.

"Eventually I think my letter, with the aid of time and cool reflection on John Daw's part, had a good effect; for the next I heard of that gentleman was that he had turned his back from his contemplated Canadian tour and was at home again. And later on, of course, I knew of his illness and of his—*conditional*—reconciliation with his bride.

"But I am getting before my story.

"There, mother. You have my *first* confession, covering all my share in that night's mystery at the Wolf's Head. You know all now. And you shall be my judge. Say! was my offence quite unpardonable?" gravely inquired the young man.

"Nay, Roderick, my dear son, do not ask me, for I

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cannot answer you! I can *love* you dearest dear! I can love you through everything! But I cannot judge you! No, I cannot!" solemnly replied Ruth Dunn.

"Then you think my offence *was* unpardonable!" groaned the young man.

"I did not say so, my dear son. I did not even think so. I did not judge you. I *could* not judge you. I can only love you. Roderick, look into your own heart, ask your own conscience. If *that* can absolve you, Roderick, you *are* indeed absolved. But I fear, I fear that it never can absolve you until you shall have succeeded in bringing about a full reconciliation between that husband and wife whom your indiscretion separated on their wedding day, and who have been alienated for the last nine years. Bring about a reunion between these two severed souls, Roderick, and then, and *then* only, you will pardon yourself, and need no other mortal's pardon!" said Ruth Dunn, solemnly.

"Then I shall never be pardoned in this world nor in the next," said the young man, bowing his head upon his hands.

"Do not say that, Roderick. Why do you say that?" inquired his mother, in a distressed tone.

"Because you tell me that my pardon depends upon my power to bring about a reunion between the pair my misadventure severed."

"Well, why not?" inquired the mother.

"Because no power on earth can reunite that husband and wife in this world—*for death has divided them!*" solemnly replied the young man.

"Roderick! What do you mean? Who is dead? Not Eldiva! I had a letter from her yesterday. And not John Daw, for you are not in mourning. Explain what you mean!"

"John Daw is dead—"

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"John Daw dead! Impossible! When? Where? How? Oh, Roderick!" cried Ruth Dunn, almost incoherent in her emotion.

"Mother, you remember the death of John Daw, nine years ago. You remember that he died in the arms of his wife, to whom he was then fully and entirely reconciled."

"But—but—he was resuscitated after apparent death! I remember the circumstances well. No one could *ever* forget them. The papers were full of the story. It has now passed into medical history. He was strangely resuscitated."

"Never! He died entirely dead, and he was buried in the Congress Burying Ground, where his bones are resting to this day! Yes! and his widow knows his grave," whispered Roderick Dunn, in a husky voice.

Ruth Dunn, gazing in the face of her son, grew pale as ashes, muttering hoarsely:

"What is this? What is this? What have I to hear next? Roderick! Roderick! If John Daw died and was buried as you say—if his bones rest in the Congressional Cemetery, and his widow knows his grave,—*who was it that took his name and his place in his father's house?*"

Roderick Dunn was tremendously agitated. His iron frame shook like a sapling in a storm. He buried his face in his hands for a moment, and then suddenly raising his head, he muttered, harshly:

"Mother!—think of the face and form of John Daw; then look at me and answer that question for yourself!"

As Ruth Dunn met the eyes of her son, conviction of the whole truth struck her soul with the deadly force of a thunderbolt.

She covered her face with her hands, and moaned:

"Oh, my heart! my heart! Oh, Father in Heaven! I

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could have borne every other sort of trial better than this!"

"Mother! mother! Your words kill me! Dearest mother, hold your judgment until you have heard the whole! You cannot judge righteous judgment until you have heard the whole? Mother, speak to me!" wailed the young man, in a voice full of anguish.

"Roderick, my heart is broken!" breathed the woman, in an almost inaudible tone.

"Oh, for the love of Heaven do not say that, or you will slay me? Mother, from my childhood up, did you ever know me to do an unworthy act?"

"Never, until this."

"Mother! will you hear my defence, before you utterly condemn me?"

"Roderick, I wish to hear it. Go on," whispered Ruth.

CHAPTER XXXIX.

THE MYSTERY OF THE CEMETERY.

"Mother, let us go back once more to that day when I got a letter in answer to my application for the place of private secretary to the 'elderly gentleman' who had advertised anonymously in the *National Intelligencer*, and whom I then discovered to be Lord John Daw," began Roderick.

"Yes," breathed Ruth.

"And you told me the astounding news that Lord John Daw was your husband and my father, from whom, for no fault of yours or of his, you had been separated for so many years, and must, you said, continue to be separated forever."

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"Yes."

"And then and there you told me the woful story of your blighted youth, casting no blame whatever upon him, and finally leaving it to my own discretion whether I should accept the situation of his private secretary or not accept it, and even whether I should reveal myself to him as his son, or not do so."

"Yes."

"Mother, I did not in my own secret mind feel so sure as *you* seemed to be that Lord John Daw had been so guiltless towards you. I considered that my loyalty was due to *you*, who had cared for me all my life, rather than to the father, whom I had never heard of until that morning. I resolved to accept the situation in his household, temporarily at least, so that I might observe and test him before revealing myself to him.

"I said nothing of this to you, my dear mother; but I prepared for my experiment.

"At first I did not think of the disguise that I afterwards assumed; but on that day when I called at the house of Lord John Daw, to see Mr. Daw, I noticed in the hall a full-length portrait of the latter, and I thought at a glance that I had seen my own reflected form in a long mirror—so perfect, down to the smallest detail of feature or peculiarity of expression, was the likeness between myself and that counterfeit presentment, which I knew instinctively must be the portrait of my brother.

"Then I recollected your information to me that I was but a younger image of what my father was when you first knew him, and an exact counterpart of what he must have been at my age.

"And I thought if I should go undisguised into the presence of Lord John Daw, this likeness would be seen at once and my identity would be recognized or suspected.

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"So I determined to go in disguise—disguise in which my successful training in the Thespian Corps of our college had made me an adept.

"I determined that my disguise should be so perfect as to render me unrecognizable even by *you* if you should meet me in my transformed state.

"I had an old friend, Peter Dee, once a classmate of mine in the college, afterwards a small farmer living with his mother on their little farm across the Eastern Branch.

"Peter was about my size and age; but he had one deformity—a hump back. It occurred to me to make myself up to look like Peter in form; but to do so I should have to get Peter's coat made to fit his hump back, or one cut exactly after its fashion.

"I went out that night to see Peter, and telling him—the truth so far as it went—that I had a part to act, I borrowed his best coat for a week, intending to keep it until I could get one made like it, which I thought I could do in four or five days.

I brought this coat home, but was rather puzzled how to contrive to disguise myself in these small lodgings and leave the house without your knowledge.

"Chance favored me. You were summoned in haste to the bedside of a sick neighbor. During your absence I made myself up, using the same padding which had served me in making up for the stage. And when I looked at myself, in that little glass on the top of that old bureau, I was perfectly satisfied with the result of my transformation. The fair, tall, erect young man with cleanly shaven face was turned into a high-shouldered, humpbacked, stooping, scholarly looking gentleman in a wig and spectacles.

"I took my credentials with me, and watching my opportunity to slip out of the house unseen by the market gardener or any of his family, I got away, reached the

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stage-stand on Bridge street, jumped into a coach that was just starting, and rode down to Washington and up to the house of Lord John Daw.

"I have told you of my reception there, mother, how perfectly satisfactory it was to both contracting parties.

"Lord John Daw, for brevity, called me Mr. D., and —according to his very eccentric manner—sometimes Dr. D., and even, occasionally, Professor D. At last I called myself Dee.

"You will understand now why it was necessary for me to come to see you only very late at night, and to leave you again very early in the morning. I had to take time between leaving Lord John Daw's house and reaching home at night to change my humpback professor's dress for the ordinary clothing of Roderick Dunn; and similarly between leaving home in the morning and arriving at Lord John Daw's house to change the clothing of Roderick Dunn for the humpbacked professor's garb."

"Where did you effect this change, Roderick?" gravely inquired the lady.

"In a solitary hut that stands uninhabited on the outskirts of a piece of woods near Lord John Daw's house."

"And how did you get a coat made for yourself to suit your disguise, for, of course, you could not keep your friend's best one very long?"

"I went down to Alexandria, where I was a perfect stranger, with Peter's coat on my back, and went to a tailor there and got measured for a new one, which was sent to my address at Lord John Daw's house the same week. When I received my new coat I returned Peter his."

"And all this time, oh, Roderick! did not your conscience reproach you for this deception?" sorrowfully inquired Ruth.

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"No, mother," gravely replied the young man, "for I did not view it as a deception. I thought of it all as of a drama in which I was playing a great part. Oh, please to remember that this was nine years ago. I was but little more than a boy then, and a boyish love of the stage, of mystery, and of adventure had much to do with my action then, and with utterly blinding me to the moral aspect of my conduct.

"Meantime, I was really pleasing my employer and—studying my father. I found him arrogant, eccentric, self-opinionated, but the soul of truth and honor. I learned to love and respect him."

"And you never reflected that loving and respecting, you were still deceiving him?"

"No, not then. I say that I seemed to myself to be acting a part in a play—a part that was interesting and harmless.

"I see myself from a different point of view now. I see how that disguise léd to a deeper deception when the opportunity and the temptation was presented.

"John Daw came home unexpectedly. Time, reflection, and, more than all, my letter—which, being truth, must have borne the stamp of truth—had now convinced him that he had been too hasty and cruel in his judgment and treatment of his blameless young wife.

"He did not recognize in me the man in whose arms he had found her in the upper hall of the Wolf's Head Tavern on that fatal night; nor, therefore, did he know me as the writer of that letter of explanation. I was never formally introduced to him. Lord John always called me 'the professor,' or, 'my secretary,' or, 'Dr. D.' So nothing was said to me of the state of affairs between the estranged pair.

"But I had all my faculties on the alert to learn something of the young creature in whose fate I was so deeply

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interested; and so I discovered that he had written to her and had exonerated her from all blame, even while, with morbid pride and jealousy, he confirmed his own edict of repudiation, declaring that they must never meet again on this earth except—for a first and a last time—at the deathbed of one or the other.

"In the midst of all this, John Daw was looking miserably, and seemed to be suffering acutely. Lord John, who trusted in me and leaned upon me in a manner that was very touching and pathetic, confided to me his distressing anxiety on account of his son's health.

"'He is all that I have in the world, Professor,' he said—'all that I have in the world! A great misfortune falling upon me in the prime of life deprived me of the only woman I ever loved, or could love, and condemned me to a life of loneliness but for this one son! If he should be taken from me, I should die!—not suddenly! not by a stroke of death! but having nothing left to live for, I should fail and die.'

"Mother, I cannot tell you—I cannot give you any idea of the depth of pathos in my father's look and tone when he said this! I longed to comfort him. *Now* do you begin to see the deep subtlety of the temptation that a little later on assailed me?" pleaded the young man.

"Yes, Roderick, I see!" sighed the lady—"I see, it was the temptation of the Prince of Darkness assuming the garb of an Angel of Light to make the worse appear the better reason! But go on, my dear, tell me the rest."

"John Daw seemed to fail day by day throughout that hot summer. The most casual observer must have seen that his days were numbered.

"Lord John's anxiety and distress was so keen and deep as to make my heart ache. In vain he implored his son to consult a physician, or to seek the bracing air of the sea coast or the mountains.

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"The unhappy young man would do nothing for himself. He said that he knew he was ill of a fatal malady which no power on earth would cure or even modify. He said he suffered enough from his disease without having to suffer from sickening drugs, and for the rest, that he preferred to remain and die at home, surrounded by home comforts and familiar faces, rather than go to a strange place, where he should miss them all. The old lord was in despair.

"'I suppose he is in the right, Professor,' he said to me one day. 'I suppose there is nothing that will save him. Ah! we Daws were a long-lived race until my father, the late duke, married the heiress of the white-hearted D'Arcies, whose hereditary infirmity appears in alternate generations. Our mother died of it before she was thirty years of age; neither of her three children showed any signs of it; but you see it reappeared in her grandchildren. All the children of my brother, the present duke, passed away before they were thirty years of age. And now my dear boy is going by the same way! Well, I shall not long survive him; nay, I *will* not! for if grief should be too slow in its work, a few grains of morphia will suffice to complete it.'

"I implored him not to talk in that strain and appealed to his religious sense.

"'Ah, well,' he said, 'I trust the Divine Providence will not permit me to be tempted beyond my strength to resist.'

"Early in September a crisis came. It was a very hot, oppressive day, and we were at luncheon in the summer breakfast-room which opened upon the garden, when suddenly, without an instant's warning, John Daw fainted and fell from his seat to the floor.

"Richard Daly and myself sprang up and went to raise the fallen man.

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"Lord John Daw, with a complexion pale as ashes, with features drawn with anguish, stood over us wringing his hands.

"'Lift him up carefully; carry him to his room; and you, James,' he said, turning to the footman, who was weeping on the table, 'fly to the stables, have the fastest horse put to the lightest gig, and drive for life to fetch Dr. Hamilton, or any other doctor that you can first find! For life, James! Fly!'

"You know what followed. Mrs. Daw—Eldiva—was sent for, and on the morning of the fourth day she arrived. I did not witness the meeting; but I was told by Lord John Daw,—who instinctively came to me with all his joys as well as with all his griefs—that her presence did more for the patient than all the doctor's prescriptions.

"There was a consultation of physicians called for that day. I happened to be in my favorite nook, behind the crimson curtains that shut off the recess of the bay window from the rest of the library, when the three great medical lights of the city met there to consult upon the hopeless case of Lord John Daw's son.

"I could not hear all they said, for they spoke in a low tone, and the table at which they sat was standing in the centre of the room, at least ten feet from the bay window where I listened.

"But I gathered quite enough from their conversation to learn that they had not the faintest hope for the patient's recovery, and that they had a great desire for 'an autopsy in the interests of medical science and suffering humanity.' At least that was the way in which the doctors put it. But Dr. Hamilton, the family physician, assured his colleagues that the autopsy would be quite impossible; that from his own long experience of Lord John Daw's character, he knew that the old lord

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would as soon allow the vivisection of his own body as the *post-mortem* examination of his son's remains.

"They finally concluded that they could do nothing whatever in the case but smooth the patient's passage to the grave. They agreed upon a prescription which they hoped might do this, and which was written by Dr. Hamilton. And then they left the library.

"Then it was, my dear mother, that the Tempter ensnared me. I sat there, full of pity for the old lord, *my own father*, whom I might not claim in my own person, but might perhaps console in the character of his elder son, to whom my undisguised person bore so exact a resemblance.

"Then it was that I conceived the daring plan that I afterwards perfected and executed with so much ingenuity and success.

"I took the first steps at once. I wrote a letter to Lord John Daw telling him that I had just received the sad news that my only brother was on his death-bed, and that, therefore, I must leave the house at once. And with earnest expressions of sympathy and respect for his lordship, I closed my letter.

"You will observe, my dear mother, that in this letter I told the literal truth. My only brother *was* dying and I *had* received the news of that fact, while being an unsuspected listener to the consultation of the doctors.

"Having written this letter, I sealed and directed it, and left it on the table for his lordship. Then I went up to my room, packed my valise and left the house.

"I went first to that vacant hut of which I told you. There I put off my disguise and put on my proper clothing. Then I went to visit you and wait the issue of events.

"The next day, you know, we heard of the death of

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John Daw and of the vain efforts of the doctors to get leave to make a *post-mortem* examination of the body.

"Then I began operations. Oh, my dear mother, how much more culpable my sins seem *now*, in their confession, than they did *then*, in their commission!" said the young man, with a deep groan.

"Yes, my son; because now you hold them up to *your own view*, as well as to *mine!*" sighed the lady.

"That is one good of confession, I suppose. Well, mother, I commenced work. I had a half year's salary in my valise. I took it and went to the vacant hut where I put off my own clothes and put on my disguise. Then I went out to the cemetery and asked to see the sexton.

"I need not tell you how I won the man to my purpose, by pleading with him for the sake of humanity; by assuring him that no harm should be done to the dead, but much good to the *living;* by offering him a large sum of money—the whole of my own half year's salary and a hundred dollars over—which I felt pretty sure of being able to collect from the four physicians who were so extremely anxious to make this examination.

"Enough to say that the man yielded to sophistry and covetousness, and agreed to all I proposed.

"I then went and bargained with the doctors to give them the opportunity of making a *post-mortem* examination of John Daw's body, at midnight, after the funeral, in the parlor of the sexton.

"I will spare you the particulars of my plot and deception. I succeeded in deceiving the doctors, though at the risk of my life.

"The means that I had taken to insure the success of my plot, my malpractices upon myself, especially the sitting out of doors at night, thinly clothed, in a deadly malarious neighborhood, at the most malarious season of the year, threw me into a severe and dangerous spell

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of illness which lasted many weeks, and which had nearly proved fatal.

"This was much more than I had bargained for. I had thought to have been restored to my father within a few hours, after I had laid myself down to personate his elder son; but, as through my own malpractices I had brought on a malignant form of malaria fever, this restoration was delayed for many days.

"The doctors, who had, as they believed, violated a vault for the purpose of making a *post-mortem* examination, and while attempting to do so had by accident restored the 'subject' to life, did not dare to declare their deed while that life was still in jeopardy; so they kept me concealed in Dr. Morris' house, and treated me with the greatest skill until convalescence.

"In the meantime, my plot, instead of serving the purpose for which it was conceived and executed, namely, that of comforting the bereaved father, only added to his afflictions; for when he went to the cemetery to have the body of his dear son taken from the receiving vault and laid in the grave, behold it was discovered that that body had been taken away! And the poor father went nearly crazy with grief, while the report was circulated that the body had been stolen for dissection."

"What was really done with it?" mournfully inquired Ruth Dunn.

"After the doctors had taken me away from the sexton's house that night, the body of John Daw was replaced in the empty coffin and laid in a grave that had been prepared for it in the southeast corner of the cemetery," replied Roderick.

"It is there, then, that Eldiva goes to lay flowers," murmured Ruth.

"Yes, she knows whose dust lies there! I told her,

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under circumstances that I will presently explain to you."

"Go on."

"When I was well enough to converse freely I kept my own counsel, you may be sure! What a tale the good doctors told me! Fearing that I should be shocked into insanity by discovering that I had been buried alive and resuscitated by accident, they told me that I had been brought from The Hill to the house of Dr. Morris for change of air, quietness and more constant medical attendance, and that my removal had been effected during my insensibility. And in telling this the good doctors told what they believed to be the *literal* truth, as it might have been had *I* been John Daw.

"At length the day came when I was considered entirely out of danger and ready to be restored to my father. No doubt the prudent doctors wisely prepared him for the astounding announcement that 'his son who was dead was alive again;' for when they brought him to my bedside he was so quiet, so gentle, so fearful of startling *me*.

"Well, mother, I was taken home to The Hill and tended like an invalid prince! One of the worst complications of my new role was my supposed relations to Eldiva. An awful temptation beset me—to personate John Daw to her, as I had successfully done to all others."

"Oh, Roderick! Roderick!" groaned Ruth Dunn.

"I said the temptation beset me, mother dear, but it was resisted strongly and successfully. I could *not* have committed so great a crime!"

"No, no, I know you could not! I am sure of it. Go on!"

"Lord John Daw told me that he had broken to my 'wife' the news of my restoration to life, and urged me to

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see her. I replied that I could not. Again and again he urged me, but with the same result.

"I longed with an unutterable longing to see Eldiva; *yet I dared not do it*—dared not until the doctors ordered a long sea voyage and extensive travels for the restoration of my health of mind and body. I was ill enough in both, Heaven knows!

"I was glad when they ordered me away, and gladder still when my father urged me to see Eldiva, if only to bid her good-by before leaving the country.

"Lord John had taken it for granted that in my refusal to be reunited to my 'wife' I was following out the course laid down by John Daw, who, though fondly attached to Eldiva, had declared that they two could never meet except at the death-bed of one or the other, never to be reconciled in life, whatever they might be in death.

"I allowed him to believe this; but when he implored me to meet my wife once more, only to bid her a kind good-by, I gladly consented to do so. To see her face, to hear her voice, to touch her hand—(there would be no more than this)—to ask her forgiveness for all the sorrow I had caused her—(I could ask *this* most fittingly in both characters or either, for John Daw, in his morbid pride, had wronged her as much and had grieved her as deeply as ever I in my mad passion and infatuation had done)—to do all this, to receive her pardon, and to bid her a kindest good-by, and then to part with her, unrecognized by her—this was all I dared to hope from the interview.

"Lord John evidently expected more; he expected that this meeting would lead to a full reconciliation for life, and not for death! And he went off with alacrity to Shadow Hall to fetch Eldiva to The Hill! Ah me!

"He brought Eldiva to the house—he brought her to

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my room and left us together! That meeting *cannot* be described! It was the most blissful, the most painful of all the hours of my life, save *one*—that fatal one at the Wolf's Head!

"I had firmly resolved *only* to take her hand—but who can approach a maelstrom and not be drawn in! Again I lost my self-possession at the touch of her hand! Again I clasped her to my bosom; and in that ardor she detected me and in scorn and loathing hurled me from her!

"Yes, she of all the people around me was the only one who discovered my identity! It was a terrible moment! Neither could speak for some minutes. When I found my voice again I implored her to forgive me! and for the sake of the old man who could not have many years more to live, and to whom my presence was peace, comfort and happiness, not to betray me while he lived! I told her that I did not wish and did not intend to derive any benefit by the part I was playing then, or to claim the smallest portion of the vast inheritance afterwards.

"Well, dear mother, she listened to me with a gentleness that nearly broke my heart, and she promised to be silent during the lifetime of the old lord, and for his sake only! And then she asked me, since I was personating the resuscitated John Daw, where the mortal remains of her husband had been laid. And I told her that they reposed in the grave of the old keeper—in the south-east corner of the cemetery.

"Then she left me."

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CHAPTER XL.

"THE MAD LORD."

The next day my father and myself, with our attendants, left Washington City for Baltimore, whence we sailed for Liverpool.

"You, my dear mother, whom I contrived to visit once a week during this whole period, with the exception of the time when I was extremely ill at the Navy Yard, and with whom I even managed to spend the last night of my stay in Washington—you do not need that I should tell you anything about our voyage across the ocean, or of our extensive travels over the Eastern Hemisphere, for my letters from first to last have given you full details of all that," said the young man.

"Yes, yes, Roderick! Pass now to the discovery you made at Algiers, or rather to what followed it," said Ruth Dunn.

"Well, dear mother, as soon as Lord John had satisfied himself beyond the possibility of doubt that the story of the lady's maid was true and his erring wife had been murdered by the Arabs of the desert, as had been first truly reported many months before his marriage to you, he was all eager anxiety to go at once in quest of you.

"When I told him that I had good reason to suppose that the lady he wished to find was living in the neighborhood of Washington, and that the son whom he supposed that he had never seen had lived to grow to man's estate, he became wild with impatience to sail at once for America.

"But when I suggested that if he wished to reinstate his deserted wife and child in their rights, it would be

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necessary for him to go to England and get certified copies of the registered marriage of the parents and birth and baptism of their child, he consented to the necessary delay, and he *praised* me with tears in his aged eyes, not only for what he called my wisdom and prudence, but for my generous sympathy with him and my magnanimous interest in the welfare of a step-mother and a half-brother whom I had never seen.

"How my conscience then tortured me! I was made to feel how keen was the reproach of undeserved praise! We went to England, travelled to St. Margaret's and procured attested copies of the register of *your* marriage and of my birth and baptism.

"And while my father was doing this, I walked around the town, made sacred to me as my dear mother's earliest home. I visited the old house, which my father pointed out to me. I went over the old garden. I visited the parish church where you were married, and every spot of which I had heard you speak, and gazed upon them all with a deeper interest than I had ever felt in looking upon the most time-honored monuments of antiquity, or on the most famous specimens of modern art.

"We spent but one day and night in St. Margaret's, and then we hurried up to London, for my lord was so impatient to start for America that he would not even take time to run down into the country to see his only brother, the Duke of Alton, whom he had not seen for twenty years or more.

"On the third day after our arrival in town we embarked at St. Catherine's Docks in the *Star of the West*, bound from London to New York; and, after a prosperous voyage of five weeks, we arrived safely at New York, where we stopped only one day to recruit before starting for Washington.

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"There, my dear mother! You have my whole story with the exception of one last important item of explanation, which I shall give you presently. You must be my judge."

"Nay, nay, Roderick! I cannot judge you, my dear. You must judge yourself. But, dear boy, it seems strange to me that in all these years in which you were together, Lord John Daw never detected any of those slight differences in manner, gesture, glance, and tone that must distinguish even the most exact counterparts in form, feature, and complexion," said Ruth.

"My dear mother, you must remember this—that Lord John Daw had been separated from his son nearly all his son's life; John Daw had been brought up and educated in England while his father was engaged in speculations in America; that the young man only came to his father's house a few months before death; so that the old gentleman had little or no opportunity of becoming intimately acquainted with those individual peculiarities of which you speak; and, moreover, that the old lord was so extremely dim-eyed as to be nearly blind," said Roderick.

"But," he continued, "there were times when my father *did* see a difference in me from the son he had lost, and whom I was trying to personate to him.

"Sometimes he would sit gazing at me for many minutes, and then abruptly exclaim:

"'Jack, you have changed very much since your illness.'

"'In what respect, sir?' I would ask.

"I don't know. That's the mystery of it! You don't seem like the same man sometimes to me.'

"But this would be said evidently without the least suspicion that I was *not* the same man.

"Sometimes he would look at me silently for a long

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time, and then slowly shake his head and mumble to himself, 'Well, I do suppose such an illness and death and resuscitation as *he* has gone through *would* affect a man.'

"But lately, dear mother, a great change passed over *him*. And this is the one last important item of explanation that I promised to give you. And I must give it now, for the time approaches for your own interview with my father."

"That interview! Ah, how I dread it! How shall I go through with it? But, tell me, Roderick—what is this that you have to explain? What new trouble?" sighed the lady.

"Ah! my mother, nothing that you or I could prevent; but you shall hear. From the time that Lord John Daw discovered that his first wife *had* died at the time at which her death was reported and that his marriage with his second wife *was* as legal as he intended it to be, he became so feverishly anxious to find you and your son that—as I told you—I felt obliged to tell him that I had reason to believe you and your son were alive in Washington City.

"This I told you in my last letter; but I could not tell you then that all through our tedious sea voyage he beset me with such anxious questions that in pity to him I acknowledged that I had known you and your son in that city, and that I had some correspondence with you. He then made me describe your son to him. I told him that he was the living image of myself. Then he said:

"'To think that some years ago I thought myself a bereaved and childless old man; but now I have two stalwart, grown-up sons. The one who was dead is alive again. And the other who was lost will be found.'

"These words he repeated over so often and so pointlessly that I began to fear for the stability of his reason

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—and with good cause, for after a while the monologue changed into this :

"'The son that died is dead ; but the son that was lost is found ! Job, in his old age, has son for son !'

"I hardly knew what he meant at the time, and I was utterly confounded one day when he called me Roderick and began to tell me of my brother Jack's illness and death.

"I asked him what he meant, but he only stared at me and inquired what I meant by my question ?"

"Did he at last then detect—detect—" began Ruth.

"My imposture?" sighed Roderick, finishing her question. "No, dear mother, no ! He seemed to know that his elder son was dead, and to think that his younger one was found. The hallucinations of an insane man are usually false. The hallucinations of my poor father strangely took the form of truth. I repeat it, that he *knows* his son John is dead, and that he believes that his son Roderick is found. He seems to have forgotten all about the pretended resuscitation."

"It is very strange," said Ruth, in a thoughtful tone.

"Yes, the action of a disorded mind is often inexplicable. He knows that I am his son Roderick restored to him ; but he could not tell any one how or where it happened. And he knows that he is soon to see his long-absent wife."

"He expects me, then ?"

"Yes ; I have promised to bring you to him to-morrow. So I have tried to prepare you for the change you will find in him."

"'To-morrow !'" said Ruth. "Why, it is already to-morrow ! See, the day is dawning !"

As she spoke, she arose and threw open the window shutters.

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"And I have kept you up talking all night!" exclaimed Roderick, regretfully.

"No matter, one night's loss of rest will not hurt me in the least, dear."

"Do go to bed now, mother, and get a few hours' sleep. We need not be at The Hill before twelve o'clock," urged the young man.

"No, no, I could not sleep, or even rest, if I were to try!—Besides, I wish to be at The Hill as soon as possible. But do you go and lie down, dear Roderick, while I get breakfast, which we will take together in this room, as in the old times. Go, my dear! Your bed is in its old place in that little chamber," urged Ruth.

"As if I could do anything of the sort!" exclaimed Roderick. "Besides, I think, if I remember those old times aright, I did not lie abed while you got the breakfast. I think I was hewer of wood and drawer of water to the little establishment. Where is that old pail? And where is—

> 'That old oaken bucket, that iron bound bucket,
> That moss-covered bucket that hung by the well?'

And where is the well itself? In the old place, I'll be bound. Wells are not peripatetic! And I shall find it in the yard near the garden. And where are the market gardeners? I have not heard a sound from any of them since I have been in the house!" said Roderick, as he went and found the familiar water pail on the lower shelf of the corner cupboard.

"The market gardeners have long since emigrated to the West. We are in the house alone, Roderick," replied the lady.

"So much the better. I like that!" exclaimed the young man, as he left the room with the water pail in his hand.

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While he was gone, Ruth Dunn replenished the fire and then cut some bread to toast and some rashers of bacon to fry, and began to set the table.

Roderick returned while she was putting on her precious old china.

And he went and filled the kettle with fresh water and hung it over the fire, saying as he did so.

"You see, my years of foreign travel have not made me forget the home duties of my boyhood, mother dear."

"God bless you, my son!" exclaimed Ruth.

"Ah! say rather, God forgive me!"

"Ask that for yourself, dear boy! Ask forgiveness of the Lord for yourself in all sincerity, and you will surely have it."

"I do, indeed I do! Let me toast that bread, mother. My hands have not lost their cunning in that culinary art, either," said the young man, as he took the toasting fork from her hand and placed a large slice from the pile upon it, leaving Ruth at liberty to fry the rashers of bacon and make the coffee, which she proceeded to do in order.

When breakfast was on the table the mother and son sat down and ate it together, as in the old times—and for the last time in that house.

"When I look around on these familiar objects—this open wood-fire with its old brass andirons and fenders, and on this old rag carpet—how well I remember helping you to wind the balls for it!—and on that old four-post bed with its patchwork quilt, and that old bureau, and those windows with their blue paper shades, and the view of the road and the old college wall—and then lift this intimate old china cup to my lips; and, above all, when I see you looking so well, dear mother—I feel as if I had not been gone a day! as if, in fact, I had never been away from home at all! After all, will we be happier in

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the finer home of Lady John Daw then we have been here, dear mother?" gravely inquired the young man.

"It will depend upon ourselves, dear Roderick. Happiness is from within, not from without," replied Ruth.

The young man, having finished his breakfast, looked at his watch, saying:

"It is but half-past seven, mother dear. We are very early this morning. I do not think my lord will be awake and out of his bed before eleven, at the earliest. We need not get to The Hill before that hour. So now, if you please, I will step into that little room of mine and brush up for the visit."

"Do, my dear," replied the lady, as they both arose from the table.

Roderick went to his chamber and Ruth began to wash up the small breakfast service and replace it in the corner cupboard.

After about fifteen or twenty minutes Roderick reentered the room with a renovated toilet, and hat in hand, saying cheerfully:

"I am going out to get a carriage from the livery stable, and will be here with it in half an hour. Can you be quite ready by that time?"

"Surely, Roderick, my dear; or sooner, if necessary," replied Ruth.

"Don't hurry," said the young man, as he ran down stairs.

Ruth set her room in complete order before she began to dress herself. That was her methodical way of doing business.

She was quite ready, however, by the time that Roderick drove up to the door.

He alighted and ran up stairs, and finding her waiting there, drew her arm within his own to lead her to the carriage; but fine manners cannot always prevail in small

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houses; they had to go down the narrow staircase in single file.

When they reached the lower floor Ruth Dunn walked out of her humble home, never to return to it again.

Roderick, at her request, locked the door and gave her the key.

Then he put her into the carriage, entered and took the seat by her side, and gave the order:

"To the Capitol Hill, Washington."

A half hour's rapid drive brought them to the door of Lord John Daw's house.

CHAPTER XLI.

A LATE REUNION.

Snow covered the ground, the roof of the house and the out-buildings, and powdered the tops and branches of all the evergreen trees on the lawn.

As the carriage stopped, Roderick pushed open its door, got out and turned to help his mother to alight.

He led her up the stone steps, from which the snow had been carefully cleaned.

"Has his lordship risen, do you know?" he inquired of the porter who admitted them.

"I do not, really, sir. Shall I send and inquire?" questioned the man.

"No," replied the young gentleman, as he led the lady on his arm down the hall and up the stairs.

"Sit here, my dear mother, until I go and see if he is up," said Roderick, as he opened a door on the right of the first landing and led Ruth into an elegant parlor, upholstered in mazarine blue and gold, and drew an easy-chair for her to rest in.

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Ruth sank into the luxurious depth of its cushions and looked on the magnificence surrounding her, but without taking cognizance of anything.

Her heart and pulses seemed to stand still in suspense and expectation.

The door presently opened, and she turned around, every vein and artery now beating as if they would burst; for she thought the intruder was Roderick come back to take her to Lord John Daw.

But it was only a footman in livery, bearing a silver waiter on which stood a decanter of wine, a glass and a porcelain plate of delicate biscuits.

He placed the waiter on a stand beside the lady, filled the glass and waited.

Ruth took up the glass, and slowly sipped the rich and generous port. It seemed a very cordial to her fatigued and excited frame.

She had scarcely half emptied the wine when her son re-entered the room and whispered:

"Come, mother, dear. He is waiting for you."

She arose, trembling, took the arm of her son, and passed with him out of the room and into the sumptuous hall that led to the library at the rear of this second floor.

She recognized the place, though its gorgeous furniture was somewhat faded since she had seen it last. It had been shrouded in holland and shut up for nine years, yet it had lost its primal freshness.

Leaning on the strong arm of her son, she reached the library door. How well she remembered the muffled blue cloth doors that opened and closed so softly and silently.

Roderick, still supporting, led her in and led her down the length of the handsome room between walls lined with costly, well-filled book-cases, alternating with fine

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pictures, until they reached a library table, at which, in an arm-chair, sat a thin, pale, gray-haired old man, wrapped in a wadded gray silk gown and bowed with infirmity.

"He was sitting with his head leaning upon his hand, while his elbow rested upon the table. He had not heard their silent approach, nor did he perceive their presence until Roderick, speaking close to his ear in a low and reverential tone, said:

"Here is my mother, sir," and then slipped away and glided out of the room, leaving the long severed pair together; for he felt that this sacred meeting must be unwitnessed even by their only son.

"Ruth! Ruth! Is this really you—*you*, at last! Oh! my lost wife! how many wasted years have uselessly separated us!" the old man cried, stretching out towards her two emaciated hands, and gazing at her with faded blue eyes dimmed with tears, more of regret for the past than pleasure in the present.

She took those wasted hands and pressed them to her lips, to her tearful face, to her wearied heart, and holding them still she sank on the hassock at his feet. She could not speak.

"Since I learned that I might lawfully seek you I have been counting the days until I found you! And now I have you here; but, oh, my soul! for these wasted years! All your fault, Ruth! All your fault, my dear! If you had had more religion and less superstition we should never have parted; we should never have wasted all these years!" he sighed.

"But we thought your wife—reported dead—was living. We thought the law of the Most High stood between us," pleaded Ruth, still kissing those old hands, still pressing them to her lips and to her heart. "We thought that the law of the Most High divided us!"

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"In the person of a guilty woman—a false wife? Oh, Ruth!"

"Yet whom you had taken for better or for *worse*, until death should part you. Oh, John!"

"Death *had* parted us, my dear."

"But we did not know it. And if—believing that that woman still lived, and that law still divided us—we had united our lives, we should have sinned. Let us not look to the irrecoverable past. Let us make what we can of the future," pleaded Ruth.

"The future! Ah! my dear, how much of the future is mine? I am over seventy years of age!"

"The whole eternal future is yours, even though but a few years of it may be passed here on earth."

"I have grown an old man—an old, old man!" he sighed. "Sorrow and loneliness has aged me even more than years!"

"But your soul knows no age," said Ruth, in a soothing tone.

"Does it not? I don't know. Let me look at you, Ruth. Sit close beside me. Lean your head towards mine. I wish to see you closely. My eyes are dim," he said, closing his hands upon hers that held them, and trying to draw her up.

She arose and took a chair close beside him, put her hands each side his head and drew his face down to hers.

"Ah! you are young, Ruth—you are young and handsome. You might almost be my grand-daughter," he said, gazing closely into the mature beauty of her matronly face.

"Oh, no," she smiled; "that could not be possible. I am forty-six, you know."

"You don't look it. No, indeed, you don't look it. If

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you were a woman of fashion you could make yourself up for twenty-five easily."

"Our son is older than that. Our son is twenty-eight," smiled Ruth.

"Our son! Yes, our dear son! Am I not a modern Job? Our dear son came to me after I had lost my first-born, John. I don't remember—" here the old man put his hand to his brow with a confused and distressful look. "I am not clear how or when he came to me. I wish I could recollect."

"He came to you almost a month after the departure of your eldest son; but do not try to recall the sorrowful past. Thank the Lord for the present, dear," said the lady, gently.

"I do! I do, indeed! Do you know that for a time I almost fancied that Roderick was John come to life again? But they were so much alike. So exactly alike, in *person*, I mean, and in voice and gesture, and, in fact, in all external things; but Roderick is so much more affectionate, so much more dutiful, so much more of a comfort to me, than ever poor John was. Ah! but they had different mothers! Both sons, in all outward appearance, closely resembled me in my youth, and closely resembled each other; but in their dispositions they resembled their mothers. John had all the hardness of his mother. Now, I always thought his conduct to his young bride was most unnaturally hard and cruel. She was perfectly blameless in that affair at the Wolf's Head, as even he acknowledged; yet he discarded her on their wedding day, and refused to be reconciled to her until he came upon his death-bed! I have been called hard and cruel. I opposed the match at first, because I did approve of such unequal marriages. But when I found the heart of my son set upon the match I agreed to it. But hard and cruel as I have been called, Ruth, I could

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not have discarded a young bride for a mistake in which she was perfectly innocent."

"No, I am sure you could not," assented Ruth.

"Nor Roderick could not," added the old lord.

"No; I am sure that Roderick could never have been so cruel and unjust," again assented the lady.

"Because, you see, it was John's hardness derived from his mother. And Roderick has so much of your fine humanity, Ruth! Your delicate sense of justice and mercy," continued the old lord.

The lady bowed in silence. Remembering then, as she did, the confession that Roderick had made to her, she could do no more.

"Ruth, I wonder what has become of that dear young lady?" inquired the old lord.

"Your son's widow?" asked the lady.

"Yes! *She* is proud and stiff-necked too! But I must say I respect her for being so! Richard Daly informs me that she has never drawn one dollar of the handsome sum that was placed to her account in the bank of Washington. Yes! I do honor her independence! If her husband would not give her recognition in his life she was right to refuse everything from his family after his death. But poor John. *He* could not help being hard! Where is she now Ruth? Do you know? But why should I ask you? Of course you know nothing about her."

"Yes, I do. I know that Mrs. John Daw is at present with her uncle and aunt, Mr. and Mrs. Jubal Wells, at the Indian Queen Hotel. And that she intends to return with them at the end of the Washington season, to their country home at Bloomfield."

"Indeed! Do you know her then?"

"Oh, yes! I have known her for years, quite intimately."

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"In—*deed!* Then, perhaps, you can tell me, has she married a second time?"

"Certainly not! Didn't you hear me call her Mrs. John Daw?"

"Oh, ay, yes, to be sure! Of course she is not married again! But she may be! She is a young woman yet—not more than twenty-seven or twenty-eight years of age! And she must be a very beautiful one; much more beautiful than she was nine years ago."

"She is so. I have never seen a more beautiful woman than Eldiva Daw!" exclaimed Ruth.

"Then you never looked in the glass, my dear!" exclaimed the old lord, with a sparkle of his earlier gallantry and vivacity, as he raised her hand to his lips.

Ruth neither accepted nor repelled this compliment. She did not even notice it.

Lord John Daw seemed, in her view, to claim the reverence due to a father rather than the familiar love and respect due the husband.

The old man was the first to speak again.

"Tell me, since you knew my eldest son's widow so intimately, is there any likelihood of her re-marrying?"

"Not the slightest," answered Ruth.

"How does she regard the memory of her deceased husband?"

"With fidelity, I think. Up to this time she has regularly visited and decorated his grave on the anniversaries of his birth and of his death, and on all the church festivals," replied Ruth.

"Has she, indeed!" exclaimed the old lord, in a tone of incredulous amazement.

"She really has," persisted the lady.

"That is a most wonderful devotion to the memory of a husband who discarded her on her wedding day,

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and only consented to be reconciled to her on his death-bed !"

"Yes it is ! I have often thought the same."

"And there seems no chance of her marrying again ?"

"None, as I believe !"

"And yet she is young and beautiful ! Is her heart quite disengaged, do you think ? Say, Ruth ?"

"I do not know."

"But what do you *think ?*"

"I cannot think."

"Ruth, my dear, I have always felt a high respect for that lady, and a deep desire to make up to her in some way the wrong my son John did her in repudiating her almost immediately after the marriage ceremony had been performed."

"Better then than later," answered Ruth.

"So it was ! So it was ! Ruth, my dear, as Roderick is our only son and my sole heir, and is twenty-eight years of age, naturally I have been thinking about a wife for him."

"But, dear, would it not be as well to leave him to think about one for himself ?" suggested the lady.

"But he *won't !* he won't, Ruth ! And that worries me ! I would like him to marry as soon as possible now. I want to see a family of grand-children growing up around us before I die Now, Ruth, there is no young lady in the world that I esteem so much as my daughter-in-law. Ruth, I would like to bring about a marriage between Roderick and Eldiva Daw."

"His brother's widow ?" questioned the lady.

"Why, my dear, the Mosiac law held such marriages not only justifiable but obligatory ! And I consider the Mosiac law in many respects a most excellent code of morals. But John was only Roderick's half brother, after all. And Eldiva, though she bears our name, can

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scarcely be considered as his widow, since she was never in fact his wife. The marriage ceremony was celebrated between them, their marriage was duly witnessed and recorded, and that was all. The bridegroom discarded the bride a few hours later, and never saw her again until the day of his death. No, Ruth, there is nothing in the law of God or man to forbid the marriage of these two, and I wish it could be brought about," concluded the old lord.

"Marriages should never 'be brought about,' dear. Marriages should come naturally or they can come to no good," suggested the lady.

"And that is true, too! For the marriage between myself and the Lord Bishop of Norchester's daughter was brought about by our friends, did not come naturally, and did not come to any good."

"Never mind! Let us forget the past and leave the future to the Lord," said the lady.

"So we will! So we will! But tell me about yourself, dear Ruth! Roderick has told me something of the brave struggle with the world you had while bringing up our son."

"But the world was very good to me," said the lady.

"The good find life good, mostly, whatever the cynics say! Go on, Ruth! Talk to me! Tell me about yourself. I love to hear your voice! Why, Ruth, the only woman in whom I have ever felt the slightest interest since I lost you, was a woman who spoke to me in your sweet voice! She came begging for a contribution to some charity or other, I have forgotten what, and I gave her fifty or a hundred pounds. I don't remember which. I know it was a very large sum in proportion to the object in view; but it was given for the sake of the voice in which she asked it. This was years ago, Ruth, before we went abroad."

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"Yes," murmured Ruth, thoughtfully.

"Yet the tone of that sweet, low voice never seemed to leave my ears—at least my memory, for a single day since that time."

"What was the face like?" inquired Ruth.

"I—do not know. I do not at all remember. My attention was absorbed in the voice," replied the old lord.

"It was *my* voice," said Ruth, now conscientiously compelled to confess the truth.

"Yes, Ruth," he replied, misunderstanding the full meaning of her words. "It was your voice—your voice in quality, in tone, in cadence, in modulation—what shall I say? How describe the likeness, the identity? Ruth, it was your own dear voice in everything but in reality."

"But—that is just what I mean. It was my voice in *reality*," said the lady.

"Eh? What? What do you mean, Ruth?" he inquired, uneasily.

"It was I who spoke to you that day."

"*You*, Ruth? *You* spoke to me? You so near me and I not recognize you! How was that possible? And oh, why did you not make yourself known to me if it were indeed you who spoke to me in your voice? All this needs explanation, Ruth, my dear."

"Yes, it needs explanation," said the lady, "and I will give it to you now. About that time circumstances had occurred that made it necessary for me to reveal to our son the secret of his parentage. In telling him the story of my early life and of our marriage, the past came vividly back to me, and brought with it a longing to look upon your face again. Only to look upon your face! I did not wish to be recognized by you. *Mutual* recognition must have made our meeting too painful and embarrassing, under the circumstances as we then

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understood them. So that, much as I longed to see you, if I had not heard that your eyesight had been impaired, I should not have ventured to present myself. I happened to be one of the committee appointed to solicit contributions for the Sunday-school library. That circumstance gave me a pretext for calling on you, and I availed myself of it."

"And I never knew it! I never even suspected it! No, not even when your voice affected me to such a degree! Oh, how strange that I did not recognize your face!"

"It was best that you should not. I purposely sat with my back to the light and kept my face in deep shadow. Besides, remember that you had not seen me for twenty years, during which time I *had* changed; and—you had no expectation of ever seeing me again. You did not even know that I was in this country," said Ruth, soothingly, for she saw that he was inclined to blame himself for a lost opportunity.

"Strange! Strange! Ah, Ruth, if I had recognized you then I should never have let you go again! Our reunion would have been nearly ten years sooner," he sighed.

She did not contradict him, although she knew that he was mistaken, and that no arguments or persuasion on his part could have induced her to accede to his wish while there remained the shadow of a doubt as to the existence of his false wife.

He changed the conversation by asking abruptly:

"Ruth, do you think that you can induce my daughter-in-law, Mrs. John Daw, to come and see me?"

"I think so, I can try at all events," replied Ruth, doubtful in her own mind whether Eldiva would ever consent to meet Roderick Daw in this world again.

At this moment a bell sounded through the house.

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"That is the first dinner-bell," said the old lord, glancing at the ormolu clock on its pedestal, that now marked the time at half-past two. "My medical attendant has directed me to take my principal meal in the middle of the day; so I dine at three, P. M.; but if that hour is too early for you, my dear, you have but to say so, and it shall hereafter be changed to suit you."

"It is not too early for me it suits me very well," replied Ruth, with a smile at the reminiscence of her own irregular midday meal, that was taken any time between twelve and four, and often omitted altogether.

"Very well, then, my dear," said Lord John stretching his hand towards the old-fashioned bell-cord and giving it a jerk.

A footman appeared in answer.

"Send the housekeeper here," said his lordship.

The man disappeared.

"You will want to take off your bonnet, my dear," he added to Ruth, as the door closed behind his messenger, to open very soon for the entrance of the housekeeper, who came in courtesying to her mistress, whom she had evidently been prepared to see.

"Lady John Daw will go to the apartments prepared for her," said the old gentleman.

"Yes, my lord. This way, my lady," said the obsequious Stacks, as she courtesied and turned toward the door.

Ruth arose and followed her conductress, feeling as if she were in a dream, through other sumptuous corridors and up another handsome flight of stairs to an upper hall, and finally, into a lofty suit of apartments, consisting of bedroom, dressing-room, and sitting-room, all upholstered in crimson and gold, and all heated by bright sea-coal fires in polished steel grates.

"These are the best rooms in the house, my lady,"

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said the communicative Stacks. "They were newly furnished and fitted up for young Mr. and Mrs. John Daw on their marriage, but they have never been occupied, my lady—never, I assure you; for when Mr. John Daw came home from the wedding *alone*, as all the world knows, he went to his old bachelor room, and that he occupied ever after whenever he was at the house. And I don't think as the furniture has been so much hurt, either, by being shut up so long. Any orders for me, my lady?"

"None," replied Ruth, gently, glad to get rid of the woman, who courtesied and left the room.

Ruth laid off her bonnet and shawl and went to the dressing-table, whose tall cheval glass stood between the two lofty, crimson-curtained front windows.

On this table stood an open dressing-case, displaying cut-glass and gold-mounted scent bottles and ivory combs and brushes.

Ruth took up one of the brushes to smooth her own raven-black hair, and then noticed on the back of the brush the monogram "E. D.," and she knew then that this dressing-case, too, with its contents, had been intended for Eldiva, and had never been used by her.

"It is like the palace of the 'Sleeping Beauty' without the princess," said Ruth to herself, as she replaced the brush in its case, and, having arranged her simple toilet, left the room to find her way down stairs, and, if possible, to the dining-room.

In the hall below she was met by her son, who was evidently on the lookout for her.

"Well, mother, dear?" he inquired, as soon as he had drawn her arm within his own.

"Well, Roderick, the trying first interview is over, and with much less of painful emotion than I had anticipated," she replied.

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"He was so well prepared for it, mother, dear. He has thought of nothing else for months past," said the young man, as he led her into the dining-room and up to her place at the head of the table, at whose foot Lord John stood by his chair, waiting, and then he passed to his own seat at the side.

While the three were still standing the old Lord John Daw reverently bowed his gray head and prayed for the Divine blessing upon them all.

Then they sat down together.

And thus was Ruth Daw, after years of patient suffering, restored to her husband's faithful heart and re-established in his sumptuous home.

CHAPTER XLII.

ALL IS WELL.

Before the close of another week the little home in the market gardener's cottage was once more broken up; the rent was paid to the end of the period for which it had been engaged, and the humble furniture, and even the clothing, was distributed to the deserving poor of the neighborhood—for the wardrobe that suited Ruth Dunn, the poor seamstress, by no means suited Lady John Daw.

Roderick attended personally to all this business, for the old lord was so exacting that he could not bear Ruth out of his sight for an hour; he meant to have the whole of her society now to make up for so much lost time, he said.

Only once he spared her from his side, and then she left him at his own request, to go to the Indian Queen

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Tavern to see Mrs. John Daw, and to beg her to come to The Hill to call on the old father-in-law who was too much indisposed at this time to leave his house.

It was a fine, clear, windy day, in early March, when Ruth, dressed in a suit of rich dark silk, and wrapped in sable furs, entered the handsome Daw carriage, drawn by its span of spirited silver gray horses, driven by a many-caped coachman in the Daw livery, and gave the order:

"Indian Queen Hotel, Ladies' Entrance."

Then, as she reclined back in her cushions, she wondered how she had best present herself to her old friend Eldiva, now her daughter-in-law. Should she go into the public parlor and send her up one of those neatly engraved cards that filled her gold card-case, and bore the inscription,

LADY JOHN DAW,

which would seem to herald a stranger; or should she go up unannounced and enter Eldiva's presence with the unceremonious manner of an intimate acquaintance? She could not yet decide. In any case, she knew that she should surprise her very much. It was unlikely that Eldiva had ever heard of Lady John Daw, or, if she had, that she, in the remotest manner, connected that name with the individuality of Ruth Dunn.

While the lady was still undecided as to her course of action, the carriage drew up before the tavern, and the footman sprang down from his perch and opened the door.

Then Ruth suddenly made up her mind. If she should go up stairs to Eldiva's parlor, which she used in common with the Wells party, she should find the whole of them there: whereas she very particularly wished to see the young lady alone.

She therefore, on entering the house, gave her card to

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a waiter, who, after showing her into the public drawing-room, took it up, at her request, to Mrs. John Daw.

Ruth did not sit, but walked up and down the long room, which she was glad to find entirely empty.

A few minutes passed, and Eldiva entered.

Ruth advanced to meet her.

Eldiva recognized her at a glance, and involuntarily started a little; but it was at the rich costume that had replaced the plain clothes of the poor matron; then quickly recovering herself and amending her bad manners, she exclaimed:

"Ruth! Oh, is it you dear? I am glad to see you; but why did you not come up?" and even while she spoke, she looked all around the parlor as if in search of some one else, and twirled the card that she held in her hand.

"I wished to see you alone, my dear," said the lady, in a low voice.

"And I am very glad to see you. Pray, sit down. Your son has returned, I see by the papers. I congratulate you very sincerely my dear Ruth," she said, thinking to herself: "And that accounts for the rich silks and sables. He has given them to her;" and all the time her eyes wandered around the room as if still in search of some one.

"Why do *you* not sit, Eldiva? Come, take this seat beside me on the sofa," said Ruth, seating herself.

"To tell you the truth, dear, I was not expecting to see *you*, happy as I am to do so. I came down to receive the lady who sent me this card—'Lady John Daw.' My lord has been getting married, it appears, and has brought me home a mother-in-law, who has done me the honor to waive ceremony and to come here to call on me. But I do not see her ladyship. There must be a mistake somewhere," said Eldiva in perplexity.

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"There is no mistake, love. Do you not understand? I sent you that card," said Ruth.

"You! You! Why, no, you could not. It is you who are mistaken. See, read, it is Lady John Daw!" said Eldiva, confidently.

"That is my name, dear," explained Ruth.

Eldiva stared blankly at the speaker.

"That is my name," repeated Ruth.

"*Your* name. *Yours!* Lady John Daw?" exclaimed Eldiva.

"Yes, mine."

"What! Are *you* Lady John Daw?"

"Yes."

"The wife of old Lord John Daw?"

"Yes."

"Well, this *is* a surprise. How long have you been married to the old lord?" inquired the young lady, still in a state of amazement.

"Some thirty years, my dear."

"Thirty years. Wonder upon wonder!" exclaimed the breathless and staring young lady.

"This requires some explanation, my dear Eldiva—an explanation that will make *many things* besides my own position clear to you. It was to give you this that I have called to-day."

"Come, come up into my bedroom. We shall be quiet there, and can talk without interruption," eagerly exclaimed the younger lady, seizing the hand of her friend.

"Now lay off your furs, or you will not feel them when you go out again," she advised, when they reached the bedroom.

In a few minutes they were seated together in two low chairs before the blazing sea coal fire in the grate, Ruth looking very grave, Eldiva all eager attention.

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"Will you be quite free to hear me, say for half an hour? I shall not detain you longer," inquired the elder lady.

"Quite free, from this until dinner time. Uncle Jubal and Aunt Joyce, that gay and festive old pair, have gone out making fashionable calls, in this wind!—Aunt Joyce wearing her windmill of a Queen Caroline bonnet. I can't think what sort of stuff those old folks are made of that they 'go it' so fast and keep so well. Phœbus and Avonia are gone to the Senate to hear Randolph's speech. None of them will be home for hours. I can give you my undivided attention for as long as you shall require it," said Eldiva.

"To let you understand things clearly, I must tell you the story of my life: but I will tell it as briefly as possible," began the elder lady.

"There is nothing that I more desire to hear, after what you have already told me," exclaimed Eldiva.

Then Ruth commenced and related her life's romance as it is known to the reader.

Eldiva listened with sympathetic interest, and often with tears.

"I acted conscientiously, though under false impressions. If I had acted otherwise I should have sinned against my own soul," said Ruth, at the end of her story.

"And yet you made two lives miserable through so many years, dear Ruth!" exclaimed Eldiva, with tears in her beautiful eyes.

"If *you* had been in my place, what would *you* have done?" gravely inquired the lady.

"Oh, I should have done as you did, cruel as it seemed! Every Christian woman would have done so, remembering that this is not the only life."

"And, after all, I have not really been so miserable as

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you might think. I have been happy in my work, humble as it was, and in my church and in my dear, good son," said the lady.

Eldiva shrugged at this last clause, and then said:

"And so Roderick Dunn is the son of Lord John Daw's second marriage with you! It seems strange to hear that now; but it certainly accounts for the startling likeness between himself and his elder brother—a likeness so exact as to have imposed upon me, and later on and for a longer period on his father!—How has that 'pious fraud' been cleared up, Ruth dear?"

"In regard to his father?" inquired the lady.

"Yes, in regard to his father," answered Eldiva.

Ruth meekly explained the situation, adding:

"It was indeed a mistaken act of mercy. Roderick saw the old man's heart breaking, and mind failing for want of his son, and rashly resolved to avail him of that fac-simile likeness to personate that son and comfort that father. He never meant to profit by that '*pious fraud*,' as you have sarcastically called it, Eldiva, although you know that there can be no such thing as a *pious* fraud."

"Forgive me, Ruth. You have defended your son well, almost successfully. I wish you could as reasonably excuse his conduct to *me* on that fatal night at the Wolf's Head Tavern; for of course, as he tells you everything, he has told you what happened there on that occasion," said Eldiva gravely.

"Yes, my dear, Roderick, has told me everything."

"He has! And now you must hear from me what I have never told any human being before!" said Eldiva,

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CHAPTER XLIII.

RECONCILIATION.

"Tell me, then, Eldiva! You alone can unravel all the mystery of that night! What was it that drove you nearly mad with terror when you rushed to Roderick for protection, mistaking him for your bridegroom, to whom he bore so perfect a resemblance; and what, my dear, took you out of your chamber in a strange tavern at that hour of the night?" kindly inquired the elder lady, taking the hand of the other.

"I must begin from the moment when my bridesmaids, who had accompanied us the first stage of our bridal tour, and had seen me to my room, took leave of me to return to the city, and left me there alone.

"I was sitting in an arm-chair by the little open wood fire that the chilly evening, though it was the first of May, rendered desirable. I was dressed in a white wrapper, and had white slippers on my feet. So you see that I was not really in a fit trim to leave my room at all.

"Presently I arose to see if all my little effects were put neatly away, and in the course of my investigation I missed a little lace handkerchief that I knew I had had in my hand when I came up stairs, for I had waved it playfully to John Daw, whom I saw outside of the front hall door.

"That was the last I remembered of my handkerchief; and whether I had dropped it at the head of the stairs or in the long passage I could not tell; but I certainly had not brought it in the room with me, for it was nowhere to be found, though I searched every nook and corner of the square, almost bare chamber.

"Now, any other handkerchief I could have let go with

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indifference, but this was the gift of my dear little Nerissa, and it was bought with the money earned by the sale of her own flowers, which she had gathered and sent up to the hotel by Old Biggs. And the name on it was worked with her own dark hair, though not by her own hands, for she was our blind child then.

"I was so distressed by the loss of my handkerchief that I could not rest. I should have run down stairs to inquire for it, had I been dressed and had the hour been earlier. I should have rung for a servant had there been a bell in the room.

"As it was, I opened my door and looked cautiously out to see if there were any one within call. I looked up and down the whole length of that long, narrow passage, flanked by rows of blue doors on each side leading into the square, bare bed-chambers, and with a dim oil-lamp in a sconce at each distant end.

"But there was not a living soul to be seen. As I peered up and down I perceived a soft, white wisp, about the size and appearance of a small crumpled handkerchief lying on the floor at the farthest end of the passage, and near the head of the stairs I had ascended.

"I thought it was my handkerchief, and that I could run and pick it up and get back to my room before any one could come and catch me in my *dishabille*. I ran out silently and swiftly, but with a beating heart, and gained the head of the stairs and grasped the object I had seen.

"It was but a piece of crumpled white tissue paper. Full of disappointment I turned to run back to my room, which was about half way down the passage; but when I got there I could not tell which of two or three doors was my own. All the doors on both sides were exactly alike, and though they were numbered, the numbers were too high up to be seen in that dim light.

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"I was vexed at my carelessness in not having left the night taper or some other sign at the door. Still I did not think of any serious result. I knew my room was on that side, and about half way down the passage. It must be one of these. I would gently try the latch of each. If the door were fastened it would not be mine.

"I tried the first. It was fast. I went to try the second, when I saw by the gleam of the light within that the door was slightly ajar. I felt sure then that *that* was my room. I felt as positively *sure* of it as any one would be of anything—to be mistaken! I opened that door and entered that room—

"Oh, Heaven, Ruth! more can be seen at a glance—more can pass in an instant—than can be described and related in an hour. All that followed in that room was seen at a glance, and passed in an instant! But it will take longer to tell you.

"A red-faced, dissipated, utterly brutal looking man sat, half undressed, and drinking, at a table. The room was full of the fumes of brandy. I saw, and turned to flee. But the brute started up, staggered towards me, and clutched my dress, and hiccoughing out words to the effect that when a lady made him a visit she must be entertained before she was suffered to depart.

"But though he was too drunk to have strength enough to detain me, and as I broke from him he reeled and fell back into his chair, I was so distraught with terror that I rushed, screaming, from the room and into the passage, and there seeing my husband, as I supposed, hurrying to my relief, I fled to him for protection.

"And oh, Ruth! though he folded me to his breast more closely, and kissed me more ardently and spoke to me more tenderly than John Daw ever had done, and though I saw and felt the difference in these, yet I only thought—if I thought at all—that this new ardor grew

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out of the new relations; and I was not undeceived until in sheer embarrassment I raised my face on hearing some one approach, and saw my unmistakable husband standing like a statue before us.

"What immediately followed I do not know. In that whirlwind of shame, terror and agony I lost my senses. What soon followed everybody knows. My bridegroom abandoned me that same night, and the next morning I was returned in dishonor to my home," concluded Eldiva, burying her burning face in her hands.

"No, no, no; not in dishonor, my darling girl! Never could dishonor attach itself to your spotless name and blameless life. And though there was much mystery, and more speculation, about that sudden abandonment and unexplained separation, yet no one ever wronged you by so much as a suspicion of unworthiness. I *know* that; and I was in the way just then of hearing more about you than you could possibly hear about yourself, and I heard nothing but expressions of the deepest sympathy with you, and the strongest indignation against Mr. John Daw. And in all this sympathy and this indignation I took a hearty share, Eldiva. The young man has long passed to his account above, so I will not dare to judge him *now*," concluded Ruth.

"No, do not judge him—at least not harshly. Consider the circumstances. I cannot again recall them. But only consider them. How black they were against me! I don't see *how* he could have done otherwise than he did. And remember that he became fully reconciled to me before he died," said Eldiva.

"Yes, I *do* consider the circumstances," said Ruth, ignoring the last sentence in Eldiva's speech, and they were very dark and condemning circumstances against you. And yet you were innocent. Let that fact teach you, dear Eldiva, to be lenient in your judgment of

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others—lenient in your judgment of Roderick Daw—against whom the circumstances of that fatal night were as dark and condemning as they were against you, and yet who was almost—not quite, but almost—equally innocent with yourself. And you should try to forgive him."

"I *have* forgiven him!" exclaimed Eldiva. "I forgave him on that day when he sent for me to bid him good-by before starting on his voyage to Europe with Lord John Daw. I *have* forgiven him; but I cannot see anything, alas! but the deepest dishonor in his conduct towards me!"

"Oh, Eldiva!" deprecatingly exclaimed the lady.

"Heaven knows I would be happy to think well of Roderick Daw; if I could at once think *well* and *truly* of him! But that is impossible! Consider it! Even from *his* point of view! He told you that I ran into his arms, did he not?" inquired the young lady, with a vivid blush.

"No, no, no; indeed he did not! He said, in effect, that when you were phrenzied with terror, you ran to him for safety, evidently mistaking him for some one to whose protection you had a legitimate right," replied the elder lady.

"Exactly! And *he*, knowing this—knowing that I was a perfect stranger to him, one on whom he had never even set his eyes before—knowing me to be the just then married bride of his own half-brother and double, for whom I, in my wild affright had taken him—knowing all this, he yet took a cruel and cowardly advantage of my mistake, and when I fled to him for safety, he received me with insult! Oh, Ruth! Ruth! I would almost rather lose the use of my tongue than use it to speak in this way of your son to you! for I love you, Ruth! and —I could have liked your son, if only I could have had

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reason to think well of him! Ruth! I have hurt you! Forgive me, dear," said Eldiva, with emotion.

"You have not offended me, dear girl; so there is nothing to forgive. I am glad you have made these charges. Remember that I invited you to make them; for until charges are distinctly made, they cannot be refuted."

"And can you refute these?"

"Assuredly. Let us take them up one by one. First, you said that he knew you to be a perfect stranger, whom he had never even seen before."

"Yes."

"My dear, he had seen you, loved you, adored you, and worshiped you for a year before he met you at the Wolf's Head Tavern. You were no stranger to him, except in name."

"*Indeed!*" murmured Eldiva, thoughtfully.

"Yes, indeed; for he had confided this mad passion to me, his mother and his only confidant. Do you believe me, Eldiva?"

"Assuredly I do, dear Ruth."

"Then the first charge is refuted, and the second is like it. You said he knew you to be then the wedded bride of his half-brother and double."

"Yes."

"He knew nothing about it, Eldiva. He did not know that he had a half-brother, or that he was in the remotest degree connected with Lord John Daw's family, for I had not at that time confided to him the secret of his parentage. Nor did he know that you, who fled to him for safety, was any one's bride. He had been told by a mistaken waiter that the tall and Juno-like blonde beauty, Imperia North, was the bride—"

"I knew that she *was* taken for the bride by several people about the inn," said Eldiva, with a faint smile.

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"And, therefore, by Roderick. And so the second charge is refuted," said Ruth.

"Yes," assented Eldiva.

"And now for the third and most serious of them all. You said, that knowing all these circumstances—which we have proved that he did *not* know—he took a cruel and cowardly advantage of your mistake, and when you fled to him for safety, he received you with insult. Was not that your last and gravest charge?"

"It was," admitted Eldiva, in a less confident tone.

"My love, Roderick Daw did nothing of the sort. He was, and he is, incapable of insulting a woman, under any circumstances, much less a woman who flies to him for safety, and, least of all, you, whom he adores and had adored for many months before that night. No, my dear Eldiva. Your lover was as honorable as you were innocent. He meditated no wrong; he took advantage of no mistake. He saw the woman he loved to madness fly to *him* for shelter from some unknown danger. He did not know her to be a bride, or even a betrothed. He knew certainly that she had mistaken him for some one else—for some brother, or cousin, or friend, he could not tell—but he knew her to be the woman that he loved, who had thrown herself in his arms, on his bosom, in deadly terror, seeking his protection. And, Eldiva, he lost his head—I think a saint might have done the same—he pressed her to the bosom she had fled to; he lavished tender and endearing words upon her; he kissed her. Eldiva, how could he help it? Was he cruel? Was he cowardly?" pleaded the mother, with clasped hands and streaming eyes.

Her earnestness won her cause.

"No, Ruth, no, he was not. I did not understand. I did not know, I am *glad* to learn that he was not so much in fault as I had believed. And I beg your pardon,

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Ruth, and his, for the very harsh manner in which I have judged him. And yet, Ruth, dear Ruth, though he was not so guilty as I thought, yet he was wrong—he was very wrong," said Eldiva in a broken voice.

"I am not defending his action, my dear; I am only seeking to palliate it. I *know* he was wrong, and *he* knows it, and has repented it for years in dust and ashes of soul. Eldiva, I know now why you left the asylum. It was to avoid meeting Roderick. Oh, my dear! will you not, now that all is explained, try to overcome your repugnance to meeting him, far enough to enable you to come with me to The Hill to see Lord John? He has sent me to beg you to come to him, my child, because he cannot now come to you. Will you, Eldiva?"

"Dearest Ruth, I am too much shaken to bear any more excitement just now. I will go to The Hill tomorrow, and—I have *no* objection to meeting Mr. Roderick Daw."

"So be it, then, my dear! God bless you, Eldiva!" replied the lady, as she arose to take her leave.

CHAPTER XLIV.

CONCLUSION.

Eldiva came to The Hill the next morning. Her card was brought up to Lady John Daw, who was sitting in the library with her aged husband.

The day was overclouded, raw and cold, and Lord John was feeling the change of weather in all his joints, though he sat in the depths of a thickly-cushioned arm-chair and was wrapped in a warmly-wadded silk dressing gown.

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"Who is it?" he inquired with some little querulousness, for he hated morning visitors to rob him of one minute of Ruth's company.

"It is your daughter-in law, Eldiva," replied the lady.

"Oh, ah! Yes, to be sure! I had forgotten that she was expected. Go to her, my dear, and explain why I cannot go down to receive her—and bring her up here, if she will come," said the old gentleman.

Ruth went to the drawing-room, where she found Eldiva drawn up to the fire warming her feet on the fender.

"It was kind of you to come, love, on such a day, too!" said the lady, as her visitor turned her head and arose to receive her greetings.

"I hope Lord John is well to-day," said Eldiva, when they had kissed and clasped hands.

"No, I am sorry to say; the weather affects him. He cannot leave his arm-chair without suffering. He begs, in consideration of his ill health, that you will waive ceremony and come up to see him."

"Of course I will, with much pleasure," said Eldiva.

And the two ladies went to the library, where the old lord struggled up to his seat to receive his daughter-in-law.

"I am glad to see you, my dear," he said; and he took her by both hands, kissed her on both cheeks, and made her sit down on a chair as close as possible to himself.

"I am very much pleased to meet you again, my lord, and I trust that as the spring advances your health will improve," said Eldiva.

"Thank you, my dear: I hope so; it always does. You are looking very well, my dear."

Eldiva bowed in response.

"And—really much more beautiful than ever," he added, after a wistful gaze upon her face.

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Eldiva blushed at this direct compliment.

"You will spend the day with us, my dear, and listen to another proposition that I have to make to you! There! lay off your bonnet and shawl right here without ceremony."

"I thank you, my lord, but I must return to the inn," replied the young lady.

"Why? why? why?" demanded the old gentleman, with a touch of his former impatience.

"Because my Uncle and Aunt Wells propose to start for their home to-morrow morning, if the weather should permit, and I have yet to pack up."

"And pray what will your maid be doing while you are packing up?"

"I have no maid, my lord."

"You have no maid have no maid! have no maid! My son's widow has no maid? How is that? How is that?" he demanded, with a spice of his ancient irritability.

"I do not require one, my lord."

"You do not! Yet there is a fitness in things! a fitness in things, my dear!" said the old lord; and then looking wistfully at Eldiva, he inquired: "And, by the way, why are *you* packing up? Going on a visit, eh? Not a long one, I hope my dear! eh?"

"I am going to Bloomfield with my Uncle and Aunt Wells to make my future home with them."

"The mischief you are, Mrs. John Daw! Now, look here, my dear! Was it not understood that you, as my son's widow, was to reside with me, on my return from abroad?"

"I think not, my lord," said Eldiva, wondering at this new proof of that strange lapse in memory that seemed to have left a hiatus in the conscious life of Lord John Daw.

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And at the same time the old lord put his hand to his head with a puzzled and distressed look as if he were painfully but vainly struggling to recall and arrange some forgotten or confused events.

"Eldiva will reconsider her plan and consent to make her home with us, where it is natural and proper that it should be," said Ruth, with a most imploring glance to the young lady.

"If you would render an old man completely happy, who is passably so now, you will do as we beg you, my love," said Lord John Daw, in a milder tone than he had yet spoken in.

"I have promised to return with my relatives to Bloomfield for a visit, and conditionally—not absolutely —I have promised to live with them," Eldiva explained. "So you see that I must keep my word."

"For the visit, yes; but do not stay long with them, my love. We want you so much more than they do," urged Lady John Daw.

"For how long does this visit last?" inquired the old lord.

"Well," said Eldiva, "it is not announced as yet, but I suppose that I may consider myself at liberty to tell *you* that Mr. Phœbus Verne and Miss Avonia Sothoron, the adopted son and daughter of my uncle and aunt, are to be married on the fifteenth of May, and I am to remain until after the wedding."

"Two months, my dear! that is a long time to wait, at least for me, who may not have very long to live," said the old lord, lugubriously.

"I hope your lordship may have very many happy years to live," said Eldiva, earnestly, touched by his tone.

"And then, when the two months have expired, will you come to us, Eldiva?" inquired the elder lady.

"As soon as the marriage is over I will come to you;

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and as the young pair are still to live with my Uncle and Aunt Wells, whose heirs and successors they are to be, I shall not be *needed*, and so, if you really want me here, I will remain with you," said the younger.

"That is my dear, simple hearted, straightforward, unselfish girl!" exclaimed Ruth, kissing Eldiva with much affection. "And now you will stay to dinner with us, dear? The first bell has rung and it will be on the table in half an hour. We dine at two o'clock, on hygienic principles, my dear."

Eldiva, wishing to please her friend and her father-in-law, the aged and failing man beside her, bowed assent and thanks, though she knew that her stay would involve the necessity of her sitting up half the night to pack.

"Then I will take you off to my room to lay aside your wraps. Come," said Ruth, rising.

Eldiva followed her conductress to Lady John Daw's handsome apartments.

Here she took off her bonnet and shawl, smoothed her jet-black ringlets, and declared herself ready to go down stairs.

Ruth led the way to the drawing-room, where they found Roderick Daw standing on the hearth-rug with his back to the fire.

He flushed to the forehead as he advanced to meet his mother and her visitor.

Ruth presented the two young persons to each other, as though they had been strangers.

"Mrs. John Daw, my son, Mr. Roderick Daw."

The gentleman bowed deeply and deferentially.

The lady inclined her head and held out her hand.

Roderick took it respectfully, and holding it reverently for a moment, said:

"Then you forgive me, madam—not merely in words and in form, but in deed and in truth?"

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"I have learned from your mother, my dear friend here, that there was but little really to forgive," said Eldiva, gently.

"Yet that little and its consequences have laid upon my soul a burden of remorse that I have borne for years, and that only your full forgiveness can lift from it," said Roderick, earnestly.

"If you really think you need forgiveness from me, you have it not only from my lips, but from my heart," gravely replied Eldiva.

Roderick raised the hand that he still held, pressed it reverently to his lips, and then led her to a seat.

At that moment the door opened, and Lord John Daw appeared, dressed for dinner, and leaning on the arm of his valet.

Roderick sprang to take the place of the servant and to support the feeble steps of his father.

"Once in every twenty-four hours, my dear, I manage to get here, and that is at the dinner hour," said the old gentleman, as, leaning on the arm of his son, he tottered to a seat beside Eldiva on the sofa.

Dinner was soon announced, and they went to the table in the adjoining dining-room—not in the usual order of such processions, for the old lord again leaned on the arm of his son in walking, while Ruth and Eldiva went together.

Soon after dinner Eldiva prepared to take leave. The carriage was ordered to take her back to the hotel.

And the next morning the young lady left Washington with Mr. and Mrs. Wells and their party for Bloomfield Farm.

Everything went on well at The Hill. As the spring advanced the health of Lord John Daw improved.

Ruth and Eldiva corresponded regularly.

About the first of May Ruth received news of Lance-

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lot and Nerissa Roslyn. Eldiva wrote that she had received letters from the young pair saying that they had pensioned off their uncle, Neil Carnes, who preferred to live with his bachelor set in London, and had disposed of all their English property, and were coming home, and expected to arrive about the middle of the ensuing May. "And I hope they may be in time for the wedding," added the writer, "for May is here already."

A week later came invitations to that wedding for Lord and Lady John Daw, and for Mr. Roderick Daw. And, much to the surprise of his wife and son, the old lord decided on accepting them.

"I suppose there is a decent inn at the nearest village, and I like country inns. As a rule, I have found them comfortable, especially in spring and summer," said his lordship, at the breakfast table, where the wedding cards had been received and read.

Later on, when he was alone with his wife, and she had asked him why he should undertake this tedious journey to be present at a marriage in which he could feel but a slight interest, he answered, testily:

"I should think, my dear Ruth, that being a woman, you might see my motive and approve my action. I want to bring our dainty young people together. I—I think they like each other from what I saw of them that day Eldiva dined with us. What do *you* think, my dear?"

"I know that our son loves Eldiva," said Ruth frankly.

"To distraction! To distraction! I saw it myself! And *she?*"

"I think that she is inclined to like him," admitted the lady.

"To be sure she is. To be sure she is. I saw *that* as well!" exclaimed the old lord, delighted to find his own opinion corroborated. "They would grow fond of each

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other! they would marry and be happy, if a punctilio did not keep them apart. Their mutual relations are awkward, but we must bring them together, Ruth, my dear, and therefore we must go to the wedding."

And so it was decided.

Preparations were immediately set on foot for making the journey as safe and comfortable as possible for the infirm old lord.

The capacious travelling carriage, which in those days formed a very important item in the establishment of every wealthy family, was brought forth from its long retirement, dusted out, polished up, and thoroughly aired and dried for the occasion.

Grooms were sent on in advance with relays of horses from Lord John Daw's own stables, all along the route.

And finally, on the tenth of May, the party set out in the most comfortable manner, and traveled most leisurely to reach the wedding that was to come off on the fifteenth.

On the evening of the thirteenth, after a delightful journey, mostly through the green forest, they arrived in good condition at the White Cow Tavern in the village of Bloomfield, about half a mile from Bloomfield Farm.

But here, though they found themselves very comfortable, they were not permitted to stay long.

A servant of Mr. Wells, happening to be in the village when they arrived at the inn, saw the party and went off hot-foot to tell his master.

The next morning Uncle Jubal came in person, and positively refusing to hear anything to the contrary, carried them all off to the capacious and hospitable farmhouse.

And here Eldiva had a delightful surprise in meeting Lancelot and Nerissa, who had arrived the day before—

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coming from Baltimore by sea to Charlotte Hall and thence to the farm. They were blooming, healthy and happy.

Roderick and Eldiva met as friends, and only the most acute observer could have detected the slight embarrassment of their manner in that meeting.

The next day, or rather the next evening, the wedding came off. It was a jolly, old-fashioned country wedding, to which all the neighbors, rich and poor, far and near, were invited, and to which nearly every one came.

The ceremony was performed at "early candle light" in the big parlor of the farm-house by the country parson whose church the family attended.

The fair bride looked fairer than ever in her simple and elegant dress of white India muslin, over white satin, white Irish gauze vail and wreath of orange blossoms, white satin slippers and long white kid gloves. The red-haired, nervous bridegroom, for a wonder, looked really better and more self-possessed than usual. Imperia North and Milo Yorke, who had come down from the city for the purpose, officiated with grace and dignity as bridesmaid and groomsman.

Lord John Daw, by particular request, gave away the bride.

After the ceremony was concluded, the congratulations offered, the huge bridescake cut and distributed and the hidden ring found in the slice that was served to Miss North, occasioning much jest and laughter, the ball was opened by the bride and groom, with the bridesmaid and groomsman for *vis-a-vis*, and as many of the young people who could find room to dance formed new cotillions, and then

"The fun grew fast and furious."

At twelve, midnight, an elegant supper was served in the long dining-room of the farm-house, after which the

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elder guests retired. The younger ones kept up the dance until daylight, and even then reluctantly left off.

The newly married pair did not start on a wedding tour; such was not the fashion of the neighborhood They staid at home "among their own people," by whom a succession of delightful entertainments were given in their honor.

Every day for a month there was a dinner, followed by a ball, at the house of some friend or relative in the neighborhood.

Lord and Lady John and Mr. Roderick Daw remained at Bloomfield, well content with their quarters, until near the middle of June—though they mixed but little with the gayeties that followed the wedding.

They saw with satisfaction the growing attachment between the two young persons who were so dear to them both.

And so they were more delighted than surprised when, on the day preceding their intended return to the city, Roderick led Eldiva before them and asked their blessing on the betrothal.

Six weeks later there was another wedding at Bloomfield Farm, but it was a much quieter one than the former, and was witnessed only by Lord and Lady Daw, Mr. and Mrs. Jubal Wells, Mr. and Mrs. Phœbus Verne, and Mr. and Mrs. Lancelot Roslyn.

Immediately after the ceremony the *really* "happy pair" set out with their party for Washington City, where it was arranged that they should take up their residence with Lord and Lady John Daw at The Hill.

One more "marriage in high life" came to pass that summer. The long betrothed pair of lovers, Milo Yorke and Imperia North, were united at the Military Headquarters of the Department of the Potomac, with so much splendor and *eclat* that this memorable wedding

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remains something of a wonder and something of a scandal even to this day; for at the wedding ceremony were present the Administration, the Foreign Embassies, the Senate and the House, the Army and the Navy, and a host of distinguished citizens; and at that wedding feast wine flowed like water at an inundation. And it was whispered that the Administration and the Embassies became "elevated," the Army and the Navy became elevated, and the Senate and the House and hosts of distinguished citizens became elevated.

Lance and Nea's hearts turned fondly to the old home of their childhood, Shadow Hall. They purchased the old house, which was yet as substantial as a fortress and far stronger and much more durable than many of the fine new mansions in the young city.

They had it thoroughly repaired—

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